A PELICAN BOOK

G. N. M. TYRRELL

The Personality of Man

An account of modern achievements and techniques in the field of psychical research, relating the evidence which has been collected to religious belief, to sociology, and to the question of human survival after death



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THE present-day reaction from the grosser and more unthinking forms of materialism has led to an enormous growth of interest in the real nature of human personality, to intensive inquiry into its lesser-known manifestations, and to an awakened realization of its range and possibilities. Psychical research has taken its place among the recognized scientific techniques, and both in Europe and America numerous inquirers are adding day by day to our fund of assured knowledge in a field once left to credulity and superstition.

The Personality of Man explains, in a non-technical way, the present position of psychical research and summarizes the result it has so far gained. It explains the various techniques that have been worked out for personality investigation, gives numerous samples of the evidence that has been collected pointing to the possibilities of telepathy, foreknowledge, survival after death, and so on; summarizes the work of investigators such as Rhine, Carington, Hettinger, Soal, and their colleagues; and examines the implications of the new knowledge thus won in relation to religious belief, to sociology, and to the future.

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THE PERSONALITY OF MAN

G. N. M. TYRRELL



"Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing."

Thomas Huxley

THE PERSONALITY OF MAN

NEW FACTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

BY

G. N. M. TYRRELL

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PREFACE

The aim of this book is twofold. In the first place it is intended to acquaint the general reader with certain evidence concerning the human personality and to suggest an outline of its significance: in the second place to point out some neglected sources of information to the research student. The two objects require different modes of treatment. In order to bring a clear outline before the general reader, brevity and a readable style are the first essentials. On the other hand, for the specialist, exactness of statement and precision of definition matter most. Unfortunately these involve a style which is apt to become prolix, interspersed with digressions and loaded with long sentences introduced to guard against possible misunderstandings.

I have endeavoured to strike a balance between pedantic accuracy and readableness, and brevity has been forced upon me. On the whole, my aim has been to produce a book easily readable by the non-specialist.

The terms defined in Chapter 5 are not claimed to be exhaustive; they merely include some of the more useful. The definitions are neither as full nor as precise as a specialist would demand; while a number of words used in the text, such as "reality," "nature," "representation," "sense-imagery," and so on, have been used without definition. I am well aware that in doing this I lay myself open to criticism from psychologists and philosophers; but I have tried as far as possible to avoid formal definitions, using words so that their most general associations may arise in the minds of readers and convey as nearly as possible my meaning. Words, like non-rolling stones, gather moss; and this moss of generally accepted associations gives them their value. Once the "moss" is ignored and an attempt made to hedge about the meaning of a word with defensive definitions, though clarity may be secured for the specialist, confusion is likely to result for the general reader. The vision of the wood becomes obscured when we approach too near and wander among the trees.

PREFACE

The appeal which I have endeavoured to make to psychological and philosophical specialists lies mainly in references given in the footnotes. I invite them to read further the sources indicated and to read, as far as possible, without presuppositions.

My thanks are due to Professor C. D. Broad, who took the initial step in the inception of this book; to my wife for help in the preparation of the book; to Miss G. M. Johnson for many valuable suggestions; to Mrs. Frank Heywood; to Professor W. Macneile Dixon, Professor H. H. Price, and Dr. R. H. Thouless for criticisms and assistance. Also to Dr. Rosamond E. M. Harding for kind permission to quote extensively from her admirable book, *An Anatomy of Inspiration*, published by W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd. (Cambridge, 1942). I also thank my many friends for their help and encouragement.

G. N. M. TYRRELL

January 1945

INTRODUCTION

Now that the second "war to end war" is drawing to its close, serious thoughts must be arising in many minds. What if war comes again? Can we feel any confidence that it will not? History is studded with an almost unbroken succession of wars: will they suddenly cease? And if they do not, what have we to look forward to? Already the casualties run into millions; and new types of weapons, each more deadly than the last, appear almost before we have become accustomed to the names of the old ones. Next time, at the touch of a button, rocket-projectiles will descend in thousands on cities and towns, spreading destruction far and wide, with fire, poison gas, and we know not what worse evils which are yet to come. Nor is this all. Applied science has placed in the grasp of whatever hand succeeds in seizing political power engines more deadly than those of physical violence. The means now exist, not only for shattering men's bodies, but for controlling and warping their minds. These means are only in their infancy, and what the end of this will be no one can foretell. The future is an enigma in which only one thing stands out clearly: it is fraught with terrific and accelerating dangers.

"Projects undreamed of by past generations," wrote Mr. Winston Churchill, "will absorb our immediate descendants; forces terrific and devastating will be in their hands; comforts, activities, amenities, pleasures will crowd upon them, but their hearts will ache, their lives will be barren, if they have not a vision above material things. And with the hopes and powers will come dangers out of all proportion to the growth of man's intellect, to the strength of his character or the efficacy of his institutions. Once more the choice is offered between Blessing and Cursing. Never was the answer that will be given harder to foretell." Again, he wrote: "Without an equal growth of Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love, science herself may destroy all that makes human life majestic and tolerable. There never was a time when the inherent virtues of human beings required more strong

and confident expression in daily life, there never was a time when the hope of immortality and the disdain of earthly power and achievements were more necessary for the safety of the children of men."[1]

"Science herself may destroy all that makes human life majestic and tolerable." Yet confident planning is in the air; and many seem to assume that the human race is certain to go on from strength to strength—that its feet are set upon a path of inevitable progress. In the nineteenth century the belief in progress was unbounded. It was sustained by the discovery of Evolution, which had come to be regarded as a cosmic principle, permeating all things and drawing them upwards to greater and greater heights. The human race, sustained by the wings of evolution, was supposed to be progressing towards ever higher states of perfection. This optimism suffered a set-back when it was discovered that Evolution, after all, is an uncertain and piecemeal process rather than a cosmic principle. Even in the realm of organic life, we now know that evolution does not mean certain and continuous progress. For example, that celebrated biologist, Professor J. B. S. Haldane, has written: "Certainly the study of evolution does not point to any general tendency of a species to progress." And again: "Degeneration is a far commoner phenomenon than progress." Yet again: "Man of to-day is probably an extremely primitive and imperfect type of rational being. He is a worse animal than a monkey. . . . The last stage of man's evolution certainly has its dark side."[2]

A serious check to faith in inevitable progress was also provided by the discovery that man's biological evolution ceased before he became civilised. As Dr. F. C. S. Schiller has pithily put it: "The first fact to be enunciated plainly and faced until it has grown familiar and its import is appreciated, is that, biologically speaking, Man has ceased to be a progressive species long ago. The evolutionary impetus which carried our ancestors from the level of the ape or even of the lemur, through such sub-human types as *Pithecanthropus* and the Heidelberg and Neanderthal man, to 'Modern man,' seems to have spent itself

[1] *Thoughts and Adventures*, pp. 279–80.
[2] *The Causes of Evolution*, pp. 153–4.

by the middle of the paleolithic period, i.e., say, thirty thousand years ago." "Modern man is not intrinsically better than his ancestors and is doubtless inferior to the ancient Greeks at their best and other peaks of human biological evolution." "There is little doubt that in the main, humanity is still Yahoomanity. Alike in mentality and moral, modern man is still substantially identical with his paleolithic ancestors. He is still the irrational, impulsive, emotional, foolish, destructive, cruel, credulous creature he always was." "Thus, civilisation is not even skin-deep; it does not go deeper than the clothes."[1] This knowledge is not new; but it is a serious fact to be reckoned with in the problem of human progress.

Although the confidence reposed in evolution during the last century has been somewhat chastened, its aftermath is still strong. Coupled with the modern idea of "Emergence," it inspired the works of C. Lloyd Morgan and it looms large in the philosophy of S. Alexander.

Is the human species bound to progress? That it has progressed from primitive beginnings is certain: but its progress turns out to have been a chancy and haphazard affair with nothing inevitable about it and with no guarantee for the future. Why are people at the present time so confident about human progress? The idea of progress is, after all, quite new. The Greeks did not entertain it. Many of them tended to think of the Golden Age as lying in the past. The Stoics held a cyclical theory, according to which everything would happen over and over again. Thus, Marcus Aurelius says: "He who sees what now is has seen all, all that was from eternity, all that shall be without end." The early Christians looked for no progress in this world, which they expected to end at any time. In fact, there was little in the ancient world to suggest universal progress until, possibly, the second century A.D. For long periods, ancient civilisations remained extraordinarily stable, as did life in the East in general. Sir Leonard Woolley, for example, points out that the streets in the ancient city of Ur were substantially the same in 2,000 B.C. as those of a typical Arab town of to-day.

Why does the idea of progress loom so large in the

[1] *Tantalus*, p. 39.

modern world? Surely because progress of a particular kind is actually taking place around us and is becoming more and more manifest. Although mankind has undergone no general improvement in intelligence or morality, it has made extraordinary progress in the accumulation of knowledge. Knowledge began to increase as soon as the thoughts of one individual could be communicated to another by means of speech. With the invention of writing, a great advance was made, for knowledge could then be not only communicated but also stored. Libraries made education possible, and education in its turn added to libraries: the growth of knowledge followed a kind of compound-interest law, which was greatly enhanced by the invention of printing. All this was comparatively slow until, with the coming of science, the *tempo* was suddenly raised. Then knowledge began to be accumulated according to a systematic plan. The trickle became a stream; the stream has now become a torrent. Moreover, as soon as new knowledge is acquired, it is now turned to practical account. What is called "modern civilisation" is not the result of a balanced development of all man's nature, but of accumulated knowledge applied to practical life. The problem now facing humanity is: What is going to be done with all this knowledge? As is so often pointed out, knowledge is a two-edged weapon which can be used equally for good or evil. It is now being used indifferently for both. Could any spectacle, for instance, be more grimly whimsical than that of gunners using science to shatter men's bodies while, close at hand, surgeons use it to restore them? We have to ask ourselves very seriously what will happen if this twofold use of knowledge, with its ever-increasing power, continues.

One human faculty is progressing while the others remain static, so that when scientific devices become available, man makes indifferent use of them without becoming in any way regenerate. Perhaps the latter statement may be questioned. It may be argued that intelligence. wisdom and morality have made, and are making, progress, though perhaps at a slower rate than knowledge. Has not civilisation, it may be said, raised the level of these qualities and distributed them more widely? Has it not caused wild

and lawless people to settle down and become wise and peaceable citizens? I think we must be careful not to mistake adaptation to circumstances for mental and moral progress. Negroes, for example, take rapidly to the use of motor transport when the white man provides it; but they remain just as incapable of inventing it as they were before. They adapt themselves to the white man's laws, but they could not originate his legal system. The disappearance of piracy and highway robbery in Western countries is due to adaptation to circumstances; not to improved morality. People will adapt their behaviour to a highly complex society without becoming morally regenerate; and this gives a false appearance of regeneration. Possibly intelligence and morality have reached higher standards for limited times in special places; the first, perhaps, in ancient Greece; the second, it might be suggested, in the Britain of to-day. But these variations pass. It is difficult to find clear evidence that mankind has progressed on the whole in either wisdom or goodness.

Perhaps it may be said that, even if this is so, increasing knowledge will itself react on human intelligence and character and alter them for good. Printing, transport, communications, etc., developed to a high pitch, make possible a system of education never known before, which is spreading to the far corners of the earth. Is not this bound to make mankind more intelligent, wiser and more moral? We might, perhaps, have hoped so were it not for the spectacle of Germany, possessing one of the best systems of education in the world, yet launching the present war on Europe; of Japan, with the advantages of Western civilisation added to two thousand years of her own culture, doing a similar thing in the Pacific; and of totalitarian forms of oppression and brutality appearing in other countries where science and education have spread their benefits. Education, we now see only too clearly, is a double-edged weapon which can be used with devastating effect in evil hands.

Another doubt occurs. Is education, after all, a *sine qua non* of civilisation? Ancient Greece attained to the highest peak of intellectual and spiritual culture without a system of education in the modern sense, with next to no

science, and with very little of the material paraphernalia on which we set so much store. We are proposing to build a better world by the sheer power of an instrument which the example of Greece shows to be not indispensable. And we know that this instrument is fraught with terrific dangers. We know also that the capacity of those who bear the burden of government and have to deal with these dangers does not increase in proportion as the latter become more complex and menacing. Increasing knowledge creates super-difficulties but not super-men. While economic, political, social and international problems become increasingly difficult, man remains essentially the same; so that there is in the situation an ever-widening gulf. How long can it continue to widen? Is there any reason to suppose that man will succeed in closing the gulf and will cease to use his knowledge for self-destruction before it is too late?

Some of those who look forward most confidently to the progress of human society propose to meet the difficulty by deliberately taking over man's evolution at the point where nature left it. By using our knowledge of physiology, psychology, genetics, etc., they propose that we should breed and evolve ourselves according to our own plan. In this way they hope that we may some day convert ourselves into super-men and give up the silly, evil and dangerous practices to which we are at present inured. We shall be paired by an all-wise government in accordance with the laws of heredity; our glands will be suitably injected, and our minds impregnated from infancy with the right suggestions. In this way the human race will follow a primrose path to Utopia. The optimists who sponsor these proposals skate lightly over the difficulties—how to find rulers capable of wielding such powers aright or populations docile enough to submit to them. Nor do they say how the glittering prize of such a piece of social machinery, during its formative period, is to be kept from the grasp of future Hitlers. They point to the long stretch of years which lies before mankind—to the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of years during which man will continue to inhabit this planet. These present wars, these predatory dictators, they say, are only man's early peccadilloes. He has plenty of

time before him in which to outgrow them—plenty of time in which to learn.

But has he? No more dangerous combination can possibly be conceived than that of static intelligence and morality combined with rapidly increasing knowledge and power. If a new and devastating weapon can be developed in a matter of months, what is the use of talking about the perfect conditions of life a million years hence? And possibilities of propaganda, the power of creating emotions and opinions, the control of millions by the will of the few—these immense and incalculable powers now being tossed by science into the hands of immature and unregenerate mankind—are fraught with even worse dangers than the means of physical destruction. How can we be sure that man will be granted the time in which to make all the mistakes he wants to? How do we know that he will not make the fatal mistake before he has learnt wisdom? Why is it not on the cards that this planet will swing through space for eons after its human inhabitants have departed, just as it did before they arrived; or, perhaps, bear with it a stagnant and fossilised living relic of what was once *Homo sapiens*?

To look these facts in the face is not pessimism; it is realism. We are indeed committed to the task of trying to improve the lot of mankind. But let us be realists; let us look at the rosy promises of Utopia through plain glass.

"I cannot understand," said Professor C. D. Broad, "how anyone with an adequate knowledge of physics, biology, psychology and history can believe that mankind as a whole can reach and maintain indefinitely an earthly paradise. Such a belief is a sign of amiability in the young but of imbecility or wilful blindness in the mature."[1]

Those who build paper utopias show a strange unfamiliarity with human nature. As Professor W. Macneile Dixon points out in his delightful Gifford Lectures: "There is a rebel in every man; men will revolt and demand again their freedom. As Dostoievsky expressed it, when everything is smooth and ordered and perfect 'in the midst of this universal reason there will appear all of a sudden and

[1] *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. xlv., p. 160.

unexpectedly some common-faced or rather cynical and sneering gentleman, who, with his arms akimbo, will say to us: "Now then, you fellows, what about smashing all this reason to bits, sending their logarithms to the devil, and living according to our own silly will?"' And he will have followers in their thousands." "No means will ever be found to induce human beings finally to surrender themselves, either body or soul, to a dictated felicity, to satisfactions chosen for them, whatever vulgar Cæsars rule the world."[1]

Nor should it be forgotten that universal peace and prosperity is not entirely a future ideal. Something like it has been experienced in the past. Why, when it was established, did it not go on from strength to strength? Historians, no doubt, can point to reasons; but will there be no reasons on the next occasion? Listen to the voice of a second-century enthusiast describing the "League of Nations" which existed under the *pax Romana*. "Regions, once desert solitudes, are thickly dotted with flourishing cities. The world has laid the sword aside and keeps universal festival with all pomp and gladness. All other feuds and rivalries are gone and cities now vie with one another only in their splendour and their pleasures. Every space is crowded with porticos, gymnasia, fountains, temples with studios and schools. Sandy wastes, trackless mountains, broad rivers, present no barrier to the traveller, who finds his home and country everywhere. The earth has become a vast pleasure-garden."[2]

How glorious! What a croaking pessimist would that man have seemed who had then prophesied the advent of the Dark Ages!

My object is to point out that now, at the very time when hopes are running high about post-war reconstruction and Blake's *Jerusalem* is being sung in churches, it is well to remember that a huge question-mark stands over the ideal of human progress. Something is woven into the weft and warp of our own natures and into the fabric of the world we live in, which raises the question whether progress can ever be a sufficient ideal for humanity. Sup-

[1] *The Human Situation*, p. 190.

[2] J. C. and H. G. Robertson, *The Story of Greece and Rome*, p. 321.

pose that by some miracle of miracles all the dangers menacing progress had been averted and all the difficulties overcome, and mankind were basking in universal prosperity and peace, would it be satisfied? A pertinent passage occurs in the works of "that adorable genius," William James, as Professor Whitehead calls him. "Everyone must at some time have wondered," he says, "at the strange paradox of our moral nature, that, although the pursuit of outward good is the breath of its nostrils, the attainment of outward good would seem to be its suffocation and death. Why does the painting of any paradise or utopia, in heaven or on earth, awaken such yearnings for nirvana and escape? The white-robed, harp-playing heaven of our sabbath-schools, and the lady-like, tea-table elysium represented in Mr. Spencer's Data of Ethics, as the final consummation of progress, are simply on a par in this respect—lubber-lands, pure and simple, one and all. We look upon them from this delicious mess of insanities and realities, strivings and deadnesses, hopes and fears, agonies and exaltations, which form our present state, and *tedium vitæ* is the only sentiment they awake in our breast. To our crepuscular natures, born for the conflict, the Rembrandtesque Chiaroscuro, the shifting struggle of the sunbeam in the gloom, such pictures of light upon light are vacuous and expressionless, neither to be enjoyed nor understood. If *this* be the whole fruit of the victory, we say; if the generations of mankind suffered and laid down their lives; if prophets confessed and martyrs sang in the fire and all the sacred tears were shed for no other end than that a race of creatures of such unexampled insipidity should succeed, and protract *in sæcula sæculorum* their contented and inoffensive lives, why, at such a rate, better lose than win the battle, or at all events better ring down the curtain before the last act of the play, so that a business that began so importantly may be saved from so singularly flat a winding up." Again: "Regarded as a stable finality, every outward good becomes a mere weariness to the flesh. It must be menaced, be occasionally lost, for its goodness to be fully felt as such. Nay, more than occasionally lost. No one knows the worth of innocence till he knows it is gone for ever and that money cannot buy it back. Not the saint, but the

sinner that repenteth, is he to whom the full length and breadth and height and depth of life's meaning is revealed. Not the absence of vice, but vice there, and virtue holding her by the throat, seems the ideal state."[1]

Surely here is the key fact which no social reformer can afford to neglect. We struggle to make everything smooth and perfect; but all the while the real significance of life lies in the "delicious mess of insanities and realities" and in what is happening inwardly to ourselves as we wallow and struggle in the midst of them. We agree that war is madness; yet all the time, in the depths of our hearts, we know that "the spice of life is battle" and always will be. Prudent voices cry: "Safety first!" We applaud; but, as we do so, we are secretly listening to another voice, which cries: "Live dangerously!" This truth has often been expressed in literature. When R. L. Stevenson wrote:

> It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive,

he was not posing a perverse paradox: he was making a realistic statement about the nature of the world we live in. His words might well form an epitaph to be inscribed above the ruins of some vanished utopia.

Keats, in one of the lovely verses of his *Ode on Melancholy*, wrote:

> . . . Beauty that must die;
> And joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
> Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips.

The world slips from us before we can enjoy the satisfactions it promises, because Time, like a policeman, is always at our elbow, moving us on. Action in the temporal world yields more satisfaction than attainment, though we always hope and fancy that it is the other way about.

> Effort, expectation and desire,
> And something evermore about to be,

wrote Wordsworth. Pope saw it too when he wrote:

[1] *The Will to Believe*, pp. 168–9.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always to be blessed.

Taking it all in all, must we not agree with Macneile Dixon that: ". . . the many-fountained Utopias and Rose-scented Commonwealths will be established only, I believe, on the arrival of the Greek Kalends, when dreams come true"? Is this pessimism? If we can see no hope for mankind but the establishment of an earthly Utopia, Yes; but if we recognise that a larger hope lies before humanity, No. Two utterly incompatible ideals present themselves. For the first, all hope lies in this world; its goods are the only goods to be enjoyed, and to enjoy them is the only rational ideal. For the second, the main object of life is not to *enjoy* something but to *become* something. Inevitably, this implies an other-worldly reference to life. By wallowing in the "delicious mess of insanities and realities," we can make sense of life without creating a perfect world-state. We can be weaving ourselves into the stuff of reality. But that we cannot do on the first outlook. That outlook does not make sense until all the ills of life have been overcome and we have reached the never-never land of earthly bliss. And then, paradoxically enough, even that never-never land would fail to satisfy us.

Another difficulty is that the first outlook offers no stable basis for ethics. If the gangster accepts the principles that the goods of the present world are the only ones to be enjoyed, and the present life is the only opportunity for enjoying them, what are you going to say when he adds, logically, that that is precisely why he intends to seize all he can now? On your own showing, it is the only sensible thing to do. Will you ask him to restrain himself in order that a good time may be had by all some day? Will he be impressed?

This outlook, broadly called "materialism," is as old as civilization. It appears to-day in a new dress because it has attached itself to the ideal of Progress, and is seeking to annex the ethics of Christianity in order to make its social utopia work. Thus augmented, materialism is presented to-day as the Religion of Man, or, as it has been aptly called, the Religion of Progress. By means of these

new features, it is sought to provide it with a morality and to infuse into it a spirit of optimism. Materialists of the older school were more clear-sighted:

> One moment in Annihilation's Waste,
> One moment of the Well of Life to taste—
> The stars are setting and the Caravan
> Starts for the Dawn of Nothing—Oh, make haste!

Omar Khayyam did not talk about ethics or the wonderful world that was some day to be. He recognised the stark pessimism of his creed, and hastened to espouse the "daughter of the vine."

The ineluctable pessimism of materialism has been stressed by F. C. S. Schiller: "One need not necessarily be violently enamoured of one's own life, or cherish any abject desire for personal continuance, in order to feel that if the chapter of life is definitely closed by death, despair is the end of all its glories. For to assert that death is the end of all beings, is to renounce the ideal of happiness, to admit that adaptation is impossible, and that the end of effort must be failure. And it is to poison the whole of life with this bitter consciousness and further, it is finally to renounce the faith in the rationality of things, which could hardly be re-asserted against so wanton a waste of energy as would be involved in the destruction of characters it required so much patient toil and effort to acquire. A good and wise man dies, and his goodness and his wisdom, his incalculable powers to shape the course of things for good, are wasted and destroyed. In the light of such a fact, we should have to put the worst construction alike upon the waste and the parsimony of nature elsewhere. They will both appear inexplicable freaks of a senseless constitution of things."[1]

But the choice between a materialistic and an other-worldly philosophy is not merely a matter of preference. It is vitally important that we should know in which direction the facts of experience point. We have to ask ourselves whether it is true, as seems to be popularly supposed, that scientific knowledge has rendered materialism

[1] *Riddles of the Sphinx*, p. 380.

almost a certainty. It is a curious fact that the general conclusion to which the *whole* body of knowledge points is unknown. Knowledge is now too vast for anyone to be able to sum up its significance. The more trees are discovered the harder it becomes to see the wood. Increase in knowledge has meant increase in specialisation; and the specialist keeps on learning "more and more about less and less." Thus, when we ask for a bird's-eye view of the whole of science, we are offered a host of "worm's-eye" views of its parts. Of course, a specialist may be a man of wide culture; but that is not the point. He knows only his own branch of science thoroughly and cannot speak *ex cathedra* about others. As regards the significance of them, he is in no better position to speak than is a cultured man who is not a specialist. He may even be in a worse position, for his special knowledge may colour his outlook.

It is worth while to give one or two illustrations of the effect of specialisation, which has even entered the field of education. In a letter to *The Times* of 19th April, 1944, Professor D'Arcy W. Thompson of St. Andrews University wrote as follows: "Not long ago I sent a young graduate from my small University up to a great one in the hope that he would extend his knowledge and enlarge his mind, as we did, or were meant to do, threescore years and more ago. But he was at once told that he must 'do research,' and was set to 'work at wireworms.' For two years from his first week onwards, all day and every day, he 'worked at wireworms' in company with a little team of fellow-workers: one studied the creatures in relation to temperature, another to moisture and so on. Nothing to my mind could be more deplorable. Specialisation such as this is disastrous to an able man, and it is high time that education were 'rescued from its clutches'."

A part-share in a wireworm! Nor are specialists always in agreement even about the significance of their own subjects. There are mechanists and vitalists in biology; Lamarckians and Darwinians. In psychology there are different schools of thought. Even in physics, Sir James Jeans, when referring to the perfection of the structure of the physical world, says: "This perfection is of a purely mathematical nature, and this encourages us to say that

the physical universe is constructed on mathematical lines"[1] while Sir Arthur Eddington says: "Where does the mathematics come from? I cannot accept Jeans's view that mathematical conceptions appear in physics because it deals with a universe created by a Pure Mathematician; my opinion of pure mathematicians, though respectful, is not so exalted as that. An unbiased consideration of human experience as a whole does not suggest that either the experience itself or the truth revealed in it is of such a nature as to resolve itself spontaneously into mathematical conceptions. The mathematics is not there till we put it there."[2]

Again, one often observes the specialist's tendency to see the universe through the tinted glass of his own spectacles. Everyone must have noticed how some psychoanalysts are carried away by their subject even, sometimes, to a point verging on mono-ideism. From a totally different angle of specialisation, a keen Marxist writes: "Out of the struggle of the animal world man arose. After he had been able to snatch sufficient food to keep him alive, he began to have the opportunity to think. Thus the first concern of man is production, the production of food. The achievement of production provides the opportunity for thought, thus the mode of production of the goods to satisfy human needs comes to condition thought. Marx therefore said that the general character of the thought of any historical period, the nature of its art, science and laws, is a reflection of the mode of production that exists at that epoch. The application of this principle helps to explain the characteristics of science during the modern period, starting from the time of Galileo and Torricelli. These scientists were leaders in the introduction of isolated experiments for the investigation of phenomena. . . . According to the Marxists, this intellectual attitude was a reflection of the increasing subdivision of labour in the contemporary mode of production."[3] Compare this with Prof. A. N. Whitehead's account of the development of science in Chapter 28 below.

[1] *The Mathematical Aspect of the Universe*, p. 9.
[2] *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 137.
[3] J. G. Crowther, *Soviet Science*, p. 13.

If we turn to the philosophers for illumination, we find another group of specialists engaged largely in disputes about the meanings of propositions and words. We want to know what the *whole* body of human experience signifies and what it entitles us to believe. We need what has been called an "A.B.C. of the credible." We cannot find it. But there is one field of inquiry which could, if it were energetically explored, throw much light on our problems and perplexities—the study of the Personality of Man. Psychology has initiated that study; but it is far from having disclosed the whole range of human personality. The word "personality" is here used to indicate the entire synthesis which makes up the individual human being. Strictly such a synthesis includes the material body; but the study of the body has been taken over by anatomy and physiology and is here left out of account. What is important is that the "mind" has been found to include much that lies outside normal consciousness, and we are beginning to discover depths in it formerly undreamed of. Many, indeed, did catch a glimpse of its vastness in the past. "Four thousand volumes of metaphysics," said Voltaire, "will not teach us what the soul is." "You will not find its boundaries," said Heracleitus, "by travelling in any direction, so deep is the measure of it." "Personality is the great central fact of the universe," said the biologist J. S. Haldane. "This world, with all that lies within it, is a spiritual world." While St. Augustine coined the phrase "*abyssus humanae conscientiae*"—the abysmal depths of personality. "Man comprises something which not even the spirit of man which is in him knows."

Let us glance briefly at some of the more modern information about the Personality of Man.

I

PERSONALITY BEYOND THE CONSCIOUS THRESHOLD

1

THE SUBLIMINAL SELF AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

The "More" within Us – What is the Subliminal Self? – What is the Unconscious? – The Rubbish Heap and the Gold Mine

FEW as yet realise the full implications of the discovery that the conscious mind does not exhaust the human personality. We may not see much at first in the knowledge that there is more in us than we are conscious of; but reflection shows it to be more and more significant, until the perspective of the entire human being begins to change.

Watch a dancer, and consider the incredible complexity of her movements. Each muscle is contracted at exactly the right moment and released after exactly the right interval; all are operated in perfect correlation. Yet the dancer is unconscious of co-ordinating these movements in detail. She merely wills the general result and, by constant practice, attains it. She does not consciously issue to each muscle a separate order. Yet something must do so. Something must control the nervous mechanism in detail. *Purely* mechanical reflexes are not the answer, for pure mechanism consists only of pushes and pulls exerted on pieces of matter. Something directive must be responsible for this perfect co-ordination of muscular movement; and it is not the conscious mind. There must be mental factors within us which are neither conscious nor yet merely mechanical.

Again, consider dreams. They reveal a quasi-mental element in us which is not identical with the conscious self. No theory of mechanical reflexes will explain them. Who,

or what, constructs the dream which seems so strange and surprising to the dreamer?

The view that human personality contains elements of a mental or quasi-mental kind, over and above normal consciousness, has been hotly contested. During the nineteenth century, a theory of "unconscious cerebration" was evolved. It was a mechanistic explanation, and sought to account for these phenomena by postulating "well-worn nervous paths" in the brain. Any hypothesis of a teleological or hormic kind—any suggestion of a directing agency existing in its own right—was then considered, as one writer put it, "to be mythical and fantastic to the point of absurdity."

No one now talks about "unconscious cerebration"; but it was the starting-point in the discovery of reaches of personality stretching beyond the conscious threshold.

During the nineteenth century, human personality began to be studied, for the first time, in a scientific way. F. W. H. Myers developed his theory of the Subliminal Self, or self beneath (*sub*) the threshold (*limen*) of consciousness. He also called it the Ultra-Marginal Consciousness, which was perhaps the better term, though it did not come into use. Myers was a pioneer in psychology. He recognised the existence of obsessive thoughts, delusions, voices, visions and impulses, and that they could be psychologically treated. He showed that one stratum of the personality signals to another by means of symbolism; and he defined hysteria as a "disease of the hypnotic stratum." His conception of the Subliminal Self differed, however, in certain respects from the view of the "Unconscious" afterwards developed by Freud. It was nearer to that of the French psychologists, Richet, Janet and Binet; but had a wider basis than *l'Inconscient.*

Myers regarded the threshold of consciousness as being variable; but, what was more important, he opened the way to the enlightening view that the ordinary, conscious self is but a limited and specialised phase of the total self. He regarded the subliminal self as embracing higher as well as lower levels of being. It contains, as he put it, a "gold mine as well as a rubbish heap." "I do not, indeed," he says, "by using this term assume that there are two cor-

related and parallel selves existing always within each of us. Rather I mean by the Subliminal Self that part of the self which is commonly subliminal; and I conceive that there may be—not only *co-operations* between these quasi-independent trains of thought—but also upheavals and alternations of personality of many kinds, so that what was once below the surface may for a time, or permanently, rise above it. And I conceive also that no self of which we can here have cognisance is in reality more than a fragment of a larger Self—revealed in a fashion at once shifting and limited through an organism not so trained as to afford it full manifestation."[1]

No doubt the conception of a subliminal self raised difficulties for thought. How can two parts of the same self, one above the threshold of consciousness, and the other below it, be at once separate and a unity? If the conscious self does not know anything about the subliminal self, does not that, *ipso facto*, make them finally two? It is as well to realise at the outset that directly we try to form a mental picture of the self, our ordinary categories break down. To understand the self, we should have to grasp ideas which are basically new and strange. That selfhood and otherness from self can in some way co-exist in the same individual is evidently a fact, although we cannot understand it. Possibly if we ponder the facts about personality with an open mind we may make some progress towards forming new ideas. But, by attempting to draw the facts into our logical mill and rejecting as meaningless all that will not go into its machinery, we shall make little progress.

The work of Freud and the psycho-analytical schools clearly demonstrated the extension of a region of personality outside normal consciousness. But it must be borne in mind that these schools approached the problems of personality from an angle different from that of Myers. They approached them more from the utilitarian and pragmatic than from the strictly scientific standpoint. Psychopathologists were essentially medical therapists, seeking for methods of cure rather than for abstract knowledge about the human being. Any theory of personality which seeks

[1] *Human Personality*, Vol. I. p. 15.

to understand rather than to utilise facts can scarcely avoid being a philosophical theory. Philosophical questions arise at every turn. Freud found that certain thoughts drop out of normal consciousness and go on working underground. They are repressed, yet continue to exist and to influence conduct. To repressed thoughts of this kind, active, yet beyond the reach of voluntary recall, he gave the name of the "unconscious"; to those thoughts which, although outside consciousness, can be recalled by voluntary effort, was given the name of the "preconscious." But if one asks in what way these repressed ideas are supposed to exist apart from consciousness—whether each is supposed to be a self-existent entity or whether all are supposed to be adjectival rather than substantival, one gets no clear answer. Freud wrote: "It would put an end to all misunderstanding if from now on, in describing various kinds of mental acts, we were to pay no attention to whether they were conscious or unconscious, but, when classifying and correlating them, inquired only to which instincts and aims they belonged."[1] This shows very clearly the *practical* interests of Freud and his colleagues.

A prominent Freudian, Dr. Ernest Jones, has the following to say about the meaning of the term "Unconscious." "According to psycho-analysis, the unconscious is a region of the mind, the content of which is characterised by the attribute of being repressed, conative, instinctive, infantile unreasoning, and predominantly sexual."[2] And again: "The existence of the unconscious is the result of repression."[3]

So far we get a fairly clear idea of what is meant. But, in addition, Dr. Jones gives three more definitions of the unconscious. (1) It may be used as a synonym for "non-mental." That is the common use, as when we say that an anæsthetised person is unconscious. But as psycho-pathologists recognise the existence of *mental* phenomena of which a person is unconscious, they cannot use the word in this sense. They therefore regard consciousness as "one attribute of mentality and not an indispensable one."[4]

[1] *Collected Papers*, Vol. iv., p. 105.
[2] *Psycho-analysis*, p. 126.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 123.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 121.

(2) There is a use of the term "unconscious" which might be called a "limbo" conception, "for in it the unconscious is regarded as being an obscure region of the mind, the content of which is largely characterised by neglect and oblivion."[1] (3) There is the psycho-analytical definition developed by Freud, which regards the "unconscious" as consisting of thoughts which have been *repressed* from consciousness. The third of these appears to be a return to the definitions in the last paragraph. The second definition is puzzling.

Do psychologists regard the "unconscious" as *being* unconscious? Much activity goes on in it which might suggest that it is not. As far as one can gather, they do not intend to deny that the "unconscious" may be conscious. All they intend the term to convey is the self-evident proposition that the content of the "unconscious" is not identical with the content of normal consciousness. Some psychologists, notably Dr. Morton Prince, appear to have held the view that the "unconscious" is co-conscious with normal consciousness; just as the normal consciousness of one person, A, is co-conscious with the normal consciousness of another person, B. The term, the "unconscious," is therefore confusing. Nor does there appear to be complete unanimity in its use. Here is a definition of the "unconscious" given by a prominent psycho-analyst, Dr. Godwin Baynes. "The unconscious," he says, "is merely a term which comprises everything which exists, that has existed or that could exist beyond the range of this individual consciousness."[2] Whether Freud would have endorsed this excursion into the infinite may be doubted!

At any rate, we may relax from the difficulties of these definitions. In the present volume we shall use the term "subliminal self" to indicate that portion of the human being which is neither material body nor conscious mind, and we shall avoid the use of the term "unconscious," which is more properly adapted to psycho-pathology.

As Myers said, the subliminal self contains a gold mine as well as a rubbish heap. Let us examine some of the evidence for this statement.

[1] *Ibid.* p. 122.

[2] *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. xxx, p. 68.

II

HIGHER REACHES OF PERSONALITY

2

INSPIRATION AND GENIUS

Superlative Achievements Originate outside Consciousness. What is Genius?

It is a highly significant, though generally neglected, fact that those creations of the human mind, which have borne pre-eminently the stamp of originality and greatness, have not come from within the region of consciousness. They have come from beyond consciousness, knocking at its door for admittance: they have flowed into it, sometimes slowly as if by seepage, but often with a burst of overwhelming power. This fact did not escape the keen observation of Socrates: "I soon found," he said, "that it is not by wisdom that the poets create their works, but by a certain natural power and by inspiration, like soothsayers and prophets, who say many fine things, but who understand nothing of what they say."[1]

How comes it that the finest products of the mind are, in this sense, extra-mental? What is there outside consciousness which can produce them? They come, not only with power, but often with something exotic and other-worldly about them. Sometimes they bring with them a sense of exquisite joy. In his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, Shelley says:

Sudden thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked and clasped my hands in ecstasy.

[1] Dr. Rosamond E. M. Harding, *An Anatomy of Inspiration*, p. 68. Unless otherwise stated, the other quotations in this chapter are from this book.

And there is also a sense of revelation. In *Mont Blanc* he exclaims:

> Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
> The vale of life and death?

The task of consciousness is not to create but to seize this inrush and express it. The difficulty is immense. What comes with baffling "altogetherness" has to be spread out in sequence and put into words. Trelawny records how Shelley had wandered off into the pine forests near Pisa, where he found him, propped against a tree with several sheets of manuscript beside him. "It was a frightful scrawl," he says; "words smeared out with the finger and one upon the other, over and over in tiers and all run together. . . . It might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bull-rushes, and the blots for wild ducks; such a dash-off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him he answered: 'When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off.'"

"Poetry," declared Shelley, "is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say: 'I will write poetry.' The greatest poet even cannot say it." One after another the great writers, poets and artists confirm the fact that their work comes to them from beyond the threshold of consciousness. It is not as though this material came passively floating towards them. It is imperious, dynamic and wilful. Blake said of his poem, *Milton*: "I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without premeditation, and even against my will."

Keats said that the description of Apollo in the third book of *Hyperion* came to him "'by chance or magic—to be, as it were, something given to him.' He said also that he had 'not been aware of the beauty of some thought or expression until after he had composed and written it down. It had then struck him with astonishment and seemed rather the production of another person than his own.'"

George Eliot told J. W. Cross that in all that she considered her best writing, there was a "not herself" which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting.

George Sand, in a letter to Flaubert, says: "The wind plays my old harp as it lists. . . . It is *the other* who sings as he likes, well or ill, and when I try to think about it, I am afraid and tell myself that I am nothing, nothing at all."

Madame Guyon confesses that "before writing I did not know what I was going to write; while writing I saw that I was writing things I had never known."

Goethe said of his poems: "The songs made me; not I them. . . ."

"Wordsworth told Bonamy Price that the line in his ode beginning: 'Fallings from us, vanishings,' which has since puzzled so many readers, refers to those trance-like states to which he was at one time subject. During these moments the world around him seemed unreal and the poet had occasionally to use his strength against an object, such as a gatepost, to reassure himself." And when the power would not come, the conscious mind was helpless. "William tired himself with hammering at a passage," wrote Dorothy Wordsworth. It was useless if the power was denied.

Dickens declared that when he sat down to his book, "Some beneficent power showed it all to him." And Thackeray says in the *Roundabout Papers*: "I have been surprised at the observations made by some of my characters. It seems as if an occult Power was moving the pen."

"Kipling, in his autobiography, relates how in a difficulty he learned to trust his personal 'Daemon.' When his story, *The Eye of Allah*, again and again went dead under his hand and he could not tell why, he put it away and waited. Then, when he was meditating upon something else, his Daemon said: 'Treat it as an illustrated manuscript,' and his problem was solved." The "Daemon" behaves more like a somebody than a something, indicating that there is an extension of our personality which normally we do not

know. And what a labour it is when the conscious mind has to take over the work of the subconscious flood!

"Dostoevsky said: 'I . . . write every scene down at once just as it first comes to me and rejoice in it; then I work at it for months and years." Again the separation between the conscious mind and the source of inspiration is brought out in the case of R. L. Stevenson, who owed so much to his "Brownies." "How often have these sleepless Brownies done him honest service and given him, as he sat idly taking his pleasure in the boxes, better tales than he could fashion for himself." "And for the Little People, what shall I say they are but just my Brownies, God bless them! who do one half of my work for me while I am fast asleep, and in all human likelihood, do the rest for me as well when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself."[1] As for his conscious self, "the man with the conscience and the variable banking account," he says: "I am sometimes tempted to suppose he is no storyteller at all but a creature as matter of fact as any cheesemonger or any cheese, and a realist bemired up to the ears in actuality; so that, by that account, the whole of my published fiction should be the single-handed product of some Brownie, some Familiar, some unseen collaborator whom I keep locked in a back garret, while I get all the praise and he but a share (which I cannot prevent him from getting) of the pudding."[2]

De Musset echoes this thought when he says: "*On ne travaille pas, on écoute, c'est comme un inconnu que vous parle à l'oreille.*" And Lamartine, when he says: "*Ce n'est pas moi qui pense; ce sont mes idées qui pensent pour moi.*"

Nor is it necessarily matter of high or spiritual quality which comes from beyond the threshold of consciousness. Lewis Carroll writes: "I was walking on the hillside alone one bright summer day when suddenly there came into my head one line of verse—one solitary line—'For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see.' I knew not what it meant then: I know not what it means now: but I wrote it down and some time afterwards the rest of the stanza occurred to me,

[1] *Across the Plains*, pp. 160–1 and p. 165.

[2] *Ibid.* 165–6.

that being its last line: and so by degrees, at odd moments, during the next year or two, the rest of the poem pieced itself together, that being the last stanza."

Out of this treasure-house much else may come besides the gems of literature and music. Lord Kelvin had a power of divination. He had "at times to devise explanations of that which had come to him in a flash of intuition." "Edison had 'a weird ability to guess correctly.'" "Reiser states that Einstein, when faced with a problem, has 'a definite vision of its possible solution.'" "Sir Francis Galton thought without the use of words: 'It is a serious drawback to me in writing,' he says, 'and still more in explaining myself, that I do not so easily think in words as otherwise. It often happens that after being hard at work and having arrived at results that are perfectly clear and satisfactory to myself, when I try to express them in language I feel that I must begin by putting myself upon quite another intellectual plane. I have to translate my thoughts into a language that does not run very evenly with them.'" Here again consciousness figures, not as the originator of thought, but as its struggling exponent.

There have been men possessing extraordinary powers of grasping intuitively the result of a calculation. Bidder could determine mentally the logarithm of any number to seven or eight places, and could instantly give the factors of any large number. "He could not," he said, "explain how he did this; it seemed a natural instinct with him."[1] Myers gives a list of thirteen such persons, two of whom were men of outstanding ability (Gauss and Ampère), three of high ability (including Bidder) and one, Dase, little better than an idiot. "He (Dase) could not be made to have the least idea of a proposition in Euclid": yet he received a grant from the Academy of Sciences at Hamburg on the recommendation of Gauss, for mathematical work. In twelve years he compiled tables which would have occupied most men for a lifetime. It is interesting to observe that the powers of seven out of this list persisted only for a few years.

If we turn to music, we find the same thing. Tchaikovsky

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality*, Vol. I, pp. 80–1.

writes: "Generally speaking, the germ of a composition comes suddenly and unexpectedly." "It would be vain to try to put into words that immeasurable sense of bliss which comes over me directly a new idea awakens in me and begins to assume a definite form. I forget everything and behave like a madman. Everything within me starts pulsing and quivering; hardly have I begun the sketch ere one thought follows another." "In the midst of this magic process, Tchaikovsky continues, 'it frequently happens that some external interruption wakes me from my somnambulistic state; . . . dreadful indeed are such interruptions. Sometimes they break the thread of inspiration for a considerable time so that I have to seek it again —often in vain.'"[1] "If that condition of mind and soul, which we call *inspiration*, lasted long without intermission, no artist could survive it."

Mozart says of his inspiration: "Nor do I hear in my imagination the parts *successively*, but I hear them, as it were, all at once. . . . What a delight this is I cannot tell!"

"Wagner discovered the opening of the *Rheingold* during half-sleep on a couch in a hotel in Spezia; and in a letter to Frau Wesendonck he refers to the blissful dream-state into which he falls when composing."

"George Sand, after describing Chopin's creation as miraculous and coming on his piano suddenly complete or singing in his head during a walk, says that afterwards 'began the most heartrending labour I ever saw. It was a series of efforts, of irresolutions, and of frettings to seize again certain details of the theme he had heard,' he would 'shut himself up in his room for whole days, weeping, walking, breaking his pens, repeating and altering a bar a hundred times' and spending six weeks over a single page to write it at last as he had noted it down at the very first."

"Saint-Saëns had only to listen as Socrates to his Daemon."[2]

F. W. H. Myers, in his excellent chapter on *Genius* in *Human Personality*, says that, to be genius, a work must satisfy two requirements. "It must involve something

[1] *Ibid.* p. 9.

[2] *Human Personality*, p. 90.

original, spontaneous, unteachable, unexpected; and it must also in some way win for itself the admiration of mankind."

Does genius, then, consist of the entry of something into consciousness from beyond the conscious threshold? That in part may be; but it is surely not in itself sufficient to constitute genius. Things may enter into consciousness from without which are not of a particularly admirable kind. Genius, on the other hand, has been defined by Carlyle as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." But taking pains will not by itself induce inspiration; it is more likely to kill it. What, then, constitutes genius? I suggest that it is the combination of the two at their best. First the idea must well into consciousness from without; then consciousness must labour to express it. This needs an "infinite capacity for taking pains." The technical ability must work on the inspiration. Technical skill alone can produce a flawless piece of work, but not true greatness. That comes from beyond. Yet that which comes from beyond, if bereft of worthy expression, is not great, though it may be suggestive of greatness. Perhaps Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* was an example of this latter. In genius, inspiration and intelligence are united.

Where does the material which forms the content of an inspiration come from? Has it entered the mind at some time through the bodily senses? Or does it come from sources unknown to us? Let us consider next some examples of what occurs in states of religious mysticism.

3

MYSTICISM

The highest level of human personality

RELIGIOUS mysticism bears a strong resemblance to artistic inspiration, but is carried, so to speak, to a higher plane. It is scarcely possible to draw a hard and fast line between artistic and religious experience. Both involve the personality beyond consciousness, though, perhaps, at different levels. William James, referring to that strange something which exists above ourselves to which art makes its appeal, and without which it would not be art, says: "Most of us can remember the strangely moving power of passages in certain poems read when we were young, irrational doorways as they were through which the mystery of fact, the wildness and the pang of life, stole into our hearts and thrilled them. The words have now perhaps become mere polished surfaces for us; but lyric poetry and music are alive and significant only in proportion as they fetch these vague vistas of a life continuous with our own, beckoning and inviting, yet ever eluding our pursuit. We are alive or dead to the eternal inner message of the arts according as we have kept or lost this mystical susceptibility."[1]

Perhaps Pascal was the classical link between the intellectual genius and the religious mystic, for he was at once seer and mathematician. Philo of Alexandria, in the following passage, seems to hover between the inspirational and the mystical state. "Sometimes," he says, "when I have come to my work empty, I have suddenly become full; ideas being in an invisible manner showered upon me and implanted in me from on high; so that through the influence of divine inspiration I have become greatly excited, and have known neither the place in which I was, nor those who were present, nor myself, nor what I was saying, nor what

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 383.

I was writing; for then I have been conscious of a richness of interpretation, and enjoyment of light, a most penetrating insight, a most manifest energy in all that was to be done; having such effect on my mind as the clearest ocular demonstration would have on the eyes."[1] Note the full and completely satisfying character of the experiences of mystics and contemplatives. They are compelled by them; they are overwhelmed, as the genius is by his inspiration, only more so.

"St. Ignatius confessed one day to Father Laynez that a single hour of meditation at Manresa had taught him more truths about heavenly things than all the teachings of all the doctors put together could have taught him. . . ."[2] From the Protestant side it is the same. Jacob Boehme says: "In one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at a university."[3] St. Teresa declared that "one day, being in orison, it was granted me to perceive in one instant how all things are seen and contained in God. I did not perceive them in their proper form, and nevertheless the view I had of them was of a sovereign clearness and has remained vividly impressed upon my soul. It is one of the most signal of the graces which the Lord has granted me. . . . The view was so subtile and delicate that the understanding cannot grasp it."[4]

It seems that in so far as it can be grasped, the *inspirational essence* of mysticism is always the same. It is ineffable, inexpressible, universal. Dionysius the Areopagite says: "The cause of all things is neither soul nor intellect, nor has it imagination, opinion, or reason, or intelligence; nor is it reason or intelligence; nor is it spoken or thought. It is neither number nor order, nor magnitude nor littleness, nor equality nor inequality, nor similarity nor dissimilarity. It neither stands nor moves nor rests. . . . It is neither essence nor eternity nor time. Even intellectual contact does not belong to it. It is neither science

[1] *Ibid.* p. 481.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 410.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 410 *n.*

[4] *Ibid.* p. 411.

nor truth. It is not even royalty nor wisdom; not one; not unity; not divinity or goodness nor even spirit as we know it."[1]

Here is a western echo of the eastern conclusion. "He, the Self, the Atman, is to be described by No! No!" The human understanding is inadequate; yet the human personality can reach out and touch what is universally the same. "In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land."[2] "Attempts to limit mystical truth," says Evelyn Underhill, "—the direct apprehension of the divine substance to the formulæ of any one religion, are as futile as the attempt to identify a precious metal with the die which converts it to current coin. The dies which the mystics have used are many. Their peculiarities and excrescences are always interesting and sometimes highly significant. Some give a far sharper, more coherent impression than others. But the gold from which this diverse coinage is struck is always the same precious metal; always the Beatific Vision of a Goodness, Truth and Beauty which is one. Hence its substance must always be distinguished from the accidents under which we perceive it; for this substance has a cosmic, and not a denominational importance."[3]

It is rarely that a mystic attempts to speak of his inspirational experience as it is in its essence. That calls forth merely negatives. Usually, as with artistic inspiration, it is the form of *expression* in which the experience has been clothed which receives utterance. And this form of expression is apt to be composed of ideas with which the conscious mind is already familiar. The experience has to be cashed, so to speak, in terms of current coin. Hence it comes about that, although the central experience of mysticism is the same in all places and throughout all ages,

[1] *Ibid.* p. 416.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 419.

[3] *Mysticism*, p. 115.

its forms of expression are various. "Hence Plotinus sees the Celestial Venus, Suso the Eternal Wisdom, St. Teresa the Humanity of Christ, Blake the strange personages of his prophetic books, others more obviously symbolic objects."[1] All this is upsetting to the person who cannot grasp the principle of relativity. The mystic clings to the truth behind the shifting symbol. The literalist regards the symbol as all in all.

Mr. Aldous Huxley, in *Grey Eminence*, points out that Bérulle and those like him adapted mysticism to the dogmas of the Church, while contemplatives of the Dionysian tradition adapted dogma to their own experience, "with the result that, in so far as they were advanced mystics, they had ceased to be specifically Catholic. To a non-Christian this seems the supremely important, the eminently encouraging fact about mysticism—that it provides the basis for a religion free from unacceptable dogmas, which themselves are contingent upon ill-established and arbitrarily interpreted historical facts. To certain pious Christians, on the other hand, mysticism is suspect precisely because of its undogmatic and unhistorical character."[2]

There is a widespread misconception that mystics are people who sit about and idly dream. Nothing could be historically wider of the mark. "All records of mysticism in the west," says Miss Underhill, "are also the records of supreme human activity. Not only of 'wrestlers in the spirit,' but also of great organisers, such as St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross; of missionaries preaching life to the spiritually dead, such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola, Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, Fox; of prophets such as St. Catherine of Genoa; poets and prophets such as Mechthild of Magdeburg, Jacopone da Todi, and Blake; finally of some immensely virile souls whose participation in the Absolute Life has seemed to force on them a national destiny. Of this St. Bernard, St. Catherine of Siena, and the Blessed Joan of Arc are the supreme examples. 'The soul enamoured of my truth,' said God's voice to St.

[1] *Ibid.* p. 325–6.

[2] P. 77–8.

Catherine of Siena, 'never ceases to serve the whole world in general.'"[1]

This pathway of spiritual progress is, indeed, so hard that only the most virile and the strongest souls have won their way along it. The way of contemplation may in one sense be the way of peace—but it also opens the door to a mighty force. Professor Tyndall recorded in a letter that Tennyson had said of the mystical condition: "By God Almighty! there is no delusion in the matter! It is no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of transcendent wonder, associated with absolute clearness of mind."[2] No one who studies the records of the mystics and their wide literature can refrain from smiling at the theories of certain psychologists who attempt to explain it away. As Sir Arthur Eddington says: "Call it of God, of the Devil, fanaticism, unreason; but do not underrate the power of the mystic. Mysticism may be fought as an error or believed in as inspired, but it is no matter for easy tolerance."[3]

Yet another misconception is that to attain mystical experience is to suffer loss of identity, to become absorbed in some pantheistic or impersonal fluid. Nothing is clearer from the statements of mystics than that contemplation *enhances* individuality, though this individuality is not identifiable with the ordinary atomic self. There is a difference, subtle, important, and real.

To many, again, the contemplative is an abnormal person. "To the medical mind," says William James, "these ecstasies signify nothing but suggested and imitated hypnoid states, on an intellectual basis of superstition, and a corporeal one of degeneration and hysteria. Undoubtedly these pathological conditions have existed in many and possibly in all the cases, but that fact tells us nothing about the value for knowledge of the consciousness which they induce. To pass a spiritual judgment upon these states, we must not content ourselves with superficial medical talk, but inquire into their fruits for life."[4] There are dangers of a pathological kind attending the life of contemplation,

[1] *Mysticism*, p. 210.
[2] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 384, *n*.
[3] *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 325.
[4] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 413.

just as dangers of a pathological kind attend other walks of life. It needs discrimination to separate the truth of mysticism from its abnormal excrescences and to put each in its right place. St. Catherine of Genoa and St. Catherine of Siena both had healthy types of ecstasy, which brought with them mental and bodily invigoration. But later in life, as the body weakened, they had types of ecstasy which were not of this healthy kind. What is really surprising is that their bodily strength and their nerves held out so well under the hardships and exertions they imposed upon themselves.

There is no doubt that some of the mystics went into trance and delivered experiences in the form of what we, to-day, should call "automatic writing." Take this example: "But the Mother of the Nativity, at the Convent of Toledo, coming in with a message just as Teresa was starting on a new sheet, was terrified to see that the saint, after removing her spectacles to listen to the message, was then seized in a trance lasting several hours. The nun dared not move or go away but remained staring at Teresa until she finally came to her senses. The blank sheet of paper was by this time covered with her writing."[1] Undoubtedly in some ways the phenomena of mysticism are linked with those of psychical research. "You will in point of fact," says William James, "hardly find a religious leader of any kind in whose life there is no record of automatism. I speak not merely of savage priests and prophets, whose followers regard automatic utterance and action as by itself tantamount to inspiration. I speak of leaders of thought and subjects of intellectualised experience. St. Paul had his visions, his ecstasies, his gift of tongues, small as was the importance he attached to the latter. The whole array of Christian saints and heresiarchs, including the greatest, the Bernards, the Loyolas, the Luthers, the Foxes, the Wesleys had their visions, voices, rapt conditions, guiding impressions and 'openings.' They had these things because they had exalted sensibility and to such things persons of exalted sensibility are liable."[2]

There are also experiences of a less exalted kind which

[1] V. Sackville-West. *The Eagle and the Dove*, p. 47.
[2] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 478.

bear a family resemblance to those of mysticism. William James quotes the experience of a certain Dr. Bucke upon whom a sense of exaltation, joyousness and illumination descended while he was merely resting in a passive state. The vision lasted only a few seconds, but the sense of reality it gave lasted a quarter of a century. Some people have had impressive experiences of a similar type while under the influence of drugs or anæsthetics. Referring to an examination he had made of cases of nitrous-oxide intoxication, James says: "One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded."[1] Again he says: "Yet I repeat once more, the existence of mystical states absolutely overthrows the pretension of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe."[2]

It is clearly unreasonable to pretend that everything which is discovered in inspiration and mysticism originally entered the mind through the gates of the bodily senses during moments of inattention and is served up again as if it were something new. Wherever these things come from, they come from some original source which lies outside the world of familiar experience, though they may clothe themselves in the familiar in order to emerge. The subject of mysticism has, of course, a wide literature, and the few examples here given do no more than scratch the surface. Is there more evidence about this extra-conscious source? It is now time to examine the information which has been obtained in the more prosaic field of scientific psychical research.

[1] *Ibid.* p. 388.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 427.

III

WHAT IS PSYCHICAL RESEARCH?

4

WHAT IS PSYCHICAL RESEARCH?

What Psychical Research Is and What It Is Not

What is psychical research? Generations of popular exponents of science have inoculated the public mind with two ideas on this subject: (1) that "psychical research" is merely an up-to-date name for "Spiritualism," and (2) that science has shown the alleged phenomena of psychical research to be merely relics of superstition. The idea has sunk in that it is proper to smile when psychical research is mentioned: editors score out the words at sight.

But what are the facts? In the first place psychical research is *not* spiritualism and it is *not* superstition. It is the scientific study of human personality beyond the threshold of consciousness.

Have not the psycho-analysts dealt with this? They have dealt with part of it; but there is a great deal more which they have not. But is it worth while to go into all this stuff about cheating mediums, quackery and fraud? Can we take it seriously? If it is serious, would not psycho-analysts or psychologists have discovered the truth about it? And, if psychical research differs from spiritualism, in what way does it differ?

Let us take the last point first. It differs from spiritualism in much the same way that chemistry differs from alchemy or astronomy from astrology. No one now confuses a chemist with an alchemist or accuses him of being a superstitious person who is trying to transmute base metals into gold. But people still refer to investigators in psychical research as superstitious people who "believe" this or that

or are "trying to prove" something or other. The difficulty of distinguishing psychical research from several things which it is not is increased by the fact that the term is often applied to work which treats the subject in a loose and irresponsible manner. Many books, classed under the heading of "psychical research," quote stories without giving exact details: the statements of primary witnesses are not quoted verbatim, nor are corroborative statements given. Dates, times and other details, indicating that a thorough examination has been made, are omitted; nor are references given to sources where these things can be found. Such books often adopt the style of a running story and not of a serious statement. All this is not psychical research: but the public unfortunately has acquired the idea that it is, and thinks of the subject as a vague borderland to the marvellous; not as a branch of science.

On account of the number of misleading publications of this kind, of the prevalence of spiritualistic literature, of misleading statements published in the press and broadcast on the wireless, it is worth while repeating, even *ad nauseam*, that psychical research, properly so-called, is none of these things, but is an important investigation of certain human faculties and characteristics, carried out seriously by serious people.

The subject-matter which psychical research has to investigate possesses a long history, going back to primitive man. Magic, witchcraft, sorcery, soothsaying, etc., are immemorial. This kind of thing appears behind the ancient religions: it was old in the days of the Pharaohs. It appears again in the oracular religion of Greece. It is found among all primitive and uneducated peoples. People have reacted towards it with a combination of distrust, revulsion, contempt tinged with fear and an undercurrent of half-fascinated wonder. Education has tended to dismiss all such phenomena as the products of superstition.

Spiritualism, as a cult, is about a century old. It is only in one sense to be regarded as a modern movement. More properly it is the modern dress of ancient occultism. The main object of spiritualists is to enter into communication with the dead through the agency of mediums. The object

of psychical research is quite different. It is to investigate scientifically the ancient phenomena called "occult," because it recognises that through them may be studied the workings of those levels of the human personality which lie beneath the threshold of consciousness. By investigating these phenomena we have a chance of discovering regions of fact which we shall never reach by exploring the external world, however ingeniously we apply to it the methods of orthodox science.

Psychical research is entirely modern. It originated with the foundation of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882. Previously to this, there had existed a "Ghost Society" at Cambridge and a "Phasmatological Society" at Oxford; and the trail had been blazed by such pioneers as Professor de Morgan, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, and Sir William Crookes. But no organised group had, up to that date, pledged itself to carry out an impersonal study of the facts. Its object was to collect facts by employing the strictest standards of evidence and not to hold any collective opinion about them. This did not, of course, debar its workers from forming working hypotheses, which are essential for the progress of research. Without them, facts become "a mob and not an army." It cannot be repeated too often that psychical research is a branch of science which progresses by means of accurate observation and experiment, and is not, as its critics often say, an attempt to "prove something." Spiritualism is quite different, for it is a cult and to some extent a religion.

It is necessary to ask who founded the Society for Psychical Research, and what it has accomplished since its inception in 1882. One of its principal founders was F. W. H. Myers, author of a classical book entitled *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, first published in 1903. When at Trinity College, Cambridge, Myers read classics with Henry Sidgwick (afterwards Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University), and both pupil and tutor were intensely interested in all that related to the personality of man and his future destiny. Both were also dissatisfied with the guidance given on these matters by established religion. Discussions between Myers and his friend and tutor at last resulted in a decision to subject to

rigorous test the claims put forward by spiritualists. Myers was a scholar of high attainments and a brilliant man of letters; but he sacrificed a large part of his literary career in order to advance the knowledge of human personality. He became a psychologist first; but was prepared to follow every relevant fact wherever it might lead him. "His keenness for truth," wrote William James, "carried him into regions where either intellectual or social squeamishness would have been fatal. So he 'mortified' his *amour propre*, unclubbed himself completely, and became a model of patience, tact and humility wherever investigation required it." Myers, as a psychologist, anticipated to a considerable degree the subsequent discoveries of the psycho-analysts.

Henry Sidgwick had an equally passionate yearning for truth. He, too, with a profoundly religious temperament, was dissatisfied with the solutions offered by religion. He threw himself whole-heartedly into the investigation of spiritualism. Though disgusted by the discovery of much sordidness and fraud, he persevered and interested his wife, Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick, an extraordinarily gifted member of a highly gifted family, whose work at Newnham for the higher education of women has for long been widely known. She, together with her two brothers, Arthur and Gerald Balfour, and her brother-in-law, Lord Rayleigh, formed, with Myers and Sidgwick, the nucleus of the investigating group.

In 1882 this small group, with the addition of the physicist, William Barrett (afterwards Sir William Barrett, F.R.S.), formed the early Society. Edmund Gurney, a member of a well-known Quaker family, afterwards joined them and became one of their most enthusiastic workers. Before his early death in 1888, he had carried out some of the best of the early pioneer work in hypnotism.

The newly-formed society held its first meeting on the 17th July, 1882, under the presidency of Henry Sidgwick, "whose reputation for sanity, truthfulness and fairness," says Professor C. D. Broad in a memoir of him, "was well known to everyone who mattered in England. It was hardly possible to maintain, without writing oneself down as an ass, that a society over which Sidgwick presided and

in whose work he was actively interested, consists of knaves and fools concealing superstition under the cloak of scientific verbiage."[1] The aims of the Society were carefully drawn up, and were summarised in the first Presidential Address. The president said that it was quite impossible to exaggerate the scientific importance of what had been alleged by generally credible witnesses, if only a tenth part of it were true. "I say it is a scandal," he continued, "that the dispute as to the reality of these phenomena should still be going on, that so many competent witnesses should have declared their belief in them, that so many others should be profoundly interested in having the question determined, and yet that the educated world as a body should still be in an attitude of incredulity. Now the primary aim of our society, the thing which we all unite to promote, whether as believers or non-believers, is to make a sustained and systematic attempt to remove this scandal in one way or another. Some of those whom I address feel, no doubt, that this attempt can only lead to the proof of most of the alleged phenomena; some, again, think it probable that most, if not all, will be disproved; but regarded as a society we are quite unpledged, and as individuals we are all agreed that any particular investigation that we may make should be carried on with a single-minded desire to ascertain the facts and without any foregone conclusion as to their nature."[2] That has been the policy of this Society ever since. Its standard of evidence has never been allowed to flag. Nor has any competent person who has examined its records in detail been able to discover any serious flaw in them.

In this way started an inquiry which has continued for sixty-two years, amassing by careful and critical research evidence which has profoundly impressed those students who have examined it dispassionately. Opposition to the inquiry was, in early days, bitter, for it was widely held that to examine the evidence at all was a sign of lunacy. But even then there existed a minority of sane and balanced minds who saw the importance of the investigation.

[1] *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. xlv, p. 139.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. i, p. 8.

As early as 1888 the evidence for telepathy had accumulated to such a point that Henry Sidgwick expressed a hope that the growing evidence would so affect the younger and more open-minded portion of the scientific world that there would be a rush of ardent investigators into the field. Alas! the bulk of the scientific world did not want to investigate the facts but only to ignore them or explain them away.

The Society, however, never lacked intellectual support. Among its Presidents and past Presidents occur the names of the Right Hon. Arthur James, first Earl of Balfour; the second Earl of Balfour; Professor Henri Bergson; Professor C. D. Broad; Bishop Boyd Carpenter; Sir William Crookes; Professor Hans Driesch; Camille Flammarion; Dr. L. P. Jacks; Professor H. H. Price; Lord Rayleigh; Professor Charles Richet; Professor F. C. S. Schiller; Sir Joseph J. Thomson; Dr. R. H. Thouless, etc.

A few societies or working groups with similar scientific aims have come into existence in other countries. Prominent among these are the American Society for Psychical Research, founded as a daughter society of the British one in 1884; the Boston Society for Psychic Research; the Institut Métapsychique International in Paris, which came under the able management of Dr. Eugène Osty. During the twentieth century small societies for psychical research have been formed in Holland, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Greece and elsewhere; while here and there the psychological staffs of universities have carried out experimental work. This is notably the case at Duke University in North Carolina; also at the university of Gröningen, in Holland. At Harvard University, a Hodgson Fellowship in Psychical Research was established. In 1940 the Perrott Studentship for the study of psychical research was established as a memorial to F. W. H. Myers at Trinity College, Cambridge; and in the same year the Blennerhassett Trust, established by Mrs. Sylvia Blennerhassett, daughter of F. W. H. Myers, was instituted for a similar purpose, the funds to be under the control of the Society for Psychical Research and, under certain specified circumstances, to be transferable to New College, Oxford.

Certain new bodies, professing more or less the scientific ideal, have also come into existence. One notable investigator, Mr. Harry Price, has carried out many investigations, mainly with mediums purporting to produce physical phenomena, in his private laboratory, which, in 1925, he named the "National Laboratory for Psychical Research." He is an amateur conjurer, and was at one time Honorary Vice-President of the Magicians' Club, and is a well-qualified investigator of physical mediumship.

An International Congress of Psychical Research exists and meets periodically in different parts of the world.

By far the greatest amount of reliable evidence in psychical research is to be found in the forty-one volumes of the *Proceedings* and the thirty-one volumes of the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research, although, under the indefatigable management of Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, the Boston society also amassed much valuable information. The work of the Institut Métapsychique carried on by Osty, de Vesmes, Warcollier and others has also been of great value.

Before the war, some attention was being paid to psychical research in Germany by the department of psychology at the university of Bonn.

It may appear strange that, although the Society for Psychical Research appears to be widely known by name, few people seem to have any idea of what it is or what it has done. This is because it has never sought advertisement. Being a scientific society, it has been content to accumulate facts and to record them in its *Proceedings* and *Journal*. There is much in these publications to interest students but little to gratify the seeker after sensation. The public, therefore, reads the material disseminated by spiritualist groups but does not read the records of the Society for Psychical Research with its mass of carefully recorded cases, investigations and experimental work. Public opinion thus fails to discriminate between the two and identifies psychical research with spiritualism.

This ignorance and failure to discriminate is not confined to the general public. Men of science, and even psychologists and philosophers, who should be directly interested, do not appear to realise that these *Proceedings* embody important material for the research student.

It may be true that some of the phenomena of psychical research appear at first sight trivial; some may even wear a foolish air: but if we are on the look-out for anything which may indicate what is happening under the surface of consciousness, we cannot afford to ignore them. The attitude of being too proud to learn from the apparently trivial is not a wise one. Let us see what light the achievements of genuine psychical research can shed on the nature of the human being.

5

TERMINOLOGY

The Importance of Terms

THE first need in this subject is to be definite in the matter of terms. The terminology of psychical research is unfortunately somewhat chaotic, and it will be best to give definitions a short chapter to themselves.

Many centuries of Christianity have impressed on the Western mind the idea that the universe is divided into two parts, one natural and the other supernatural. To the supernatural part were supposed to belong the things to do with religion, diabolic occurrences, human life after death and the mass of phenomena vaguely classed as "occult." This mental outlook provides a most unfortunate start for understanding the phenomena studied in psychical research, for it places them in the supernatural realm at the outset; and science frowns heavily on the supernatural. It makes it extremely difficult for people to grasp the idea that there may be phenomena which are not classifiable as either natural or supernatural, according to the accepted meanings of these words. Where does "nature" end and "supernature" begin? It is best to leave this blind alley and to begin by calling the phenomena studied in psychical research "supernormal" instead of "supernatural." The former term commits us to less. If we say that there are things which stand above nature, we may be challenged to say where "nature" ends. But if we merely say that there are things which are above the normal, we mean no more than that there are things to which we are unaccustomed. The term "supernormal" has recently been replaced by "paranormal." There is not much difference between the two. "Paranormal" means alongside of or in addition to the normal, whereas "supernormal" means above the normal. In the present book the term "paranormal" will be used.

Some of the more important terms used in this subject must now be defined.

Personality, see p. 25.

Terms Indicating the subject-matter in general.

Psychic phenomena.	Phenomena of the soul.
Psi-phenomena.	Psi = ψ, equivalent to ps, the first two letters of "psychic."
Paragnosis.	Awareness additional to normal knowledge.
Metagnomy.	Awareness beyond intelligence.
Metapsychology.	After psychology.
Parapsychology.	Beyond psychology.
Supernormal phenomena.	Phenomena above the normal.
Paranormal phenomena.	Phenomena alongside of or in addition to the normal.

Terms indicating phases of the personality.

Subconscious.	Beneath consciousness.
Subliminal.	Beneath the threshold of consciousness.
Supraliminal.	Above the threshold of consciousness.
Unconscious and Preconscious.	See Chapter 1.

Terms indicating types of paranormal knowledge.

Telepathy.	Literally "far-feeling." The term was defined by F. W. H. Myers, who coined it, as "the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of the recognised channels of sense."
Clairvoyance.	Literally "clear-seeing." The alleged power of perceiving physical as distinct from mental events in paranormal fashion.

Telæsthesia.	An alternative word for Clairvoyance.
Extra-sensory Perception.	A generic term for all types of paranormal acquisition of knowledge.
Foreknowledge.	Non-inferential knowledge of future events.
Precognition.	An alternative name for Foreknowledge.
Retrocognition.	Non-inferential knowledge of past events outside the range of the subject's memory.
"Second sight."	A general term for the power of knowing paranormally, usually applied to Celtic Scots.

Terms concerned with the production of paranormal phenomena.

Agent.	One who, voluntarily or involuntarily, originates a telepathic message.
Percipient.	One who receives, or attempts to receive, a telepathic message. The word is also used in its ordinary meaning of a person who perceives something.
Sensitive.	One who possesses the special faculty of experiencing paranormal phenomena, especially of the extra-sensory type.
Dissociation.	A state of division of the personality. The word is used in this book in the restricted sense of a displacement of normal consciousness from its position of control.
Trance.	In the pathological sense, a state of reduced sensitivity to external stimulation; but used more loosely in psychical research to cover various states of dissociation.

Hypnosis.	An artificially induced state of trance, often highly suggestible.
Medium.	A person who manifests paranormal phenomena, usually in a state of trance.
Control.	An entity which takes the place of the normal consciousness of a medium in trance.

Automatic phenomena.

Automatic writing.	Writing done in a state of mental dissociation, without the aid of normal consciousness.
Automatic speech.	Speech which is uttered under similar conditions.
Script.	Writing (also used of dictated speech) obtained under the above conditions.
Crystal gazing or Scrying.	The artificial production of visual hallucinations, veridical or otherwise, by gazing into a crystal, etc.
Psychometry.	An ill-chosen word coined by the anthropologist, Buchanan, indicating the paranormal knowledge acquired by some sensitives by holding an object. The word is used in psychology in its proper sense of "mind-measurement."

Types of sensory phenomena.

Hallucination.	Awareness of sense-imagery or experience of sensations which have no external, physical cause. (*E.g.* seeing a man when no man is there.)

Veridical hallucination.	A hallucination which "corresponds" fairly accurately with some external fact, though not directly caused by it.
Illusion.	A misinterpretation of normally produced sensations. (*E.g.* mistaking a mirage for a pool of water.)
Apparition.	A hallucination which has a telepathic or other paranormal cause.

Physical phenomena.

Telekinesis.	The alleged movement of objects without physical contact.
Poltergeist.	See Chapter 24.

Many other terms have been invented by various writers; but they are omitted as being likely to be a source of confusion to the reader. The above terms are not all used in exactly the same sense by all writers. In the present book, technical terms will be used as sparsely as possible.

IV

THE PROBLEMS OF TELEPATHY AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

6

TELEPATHY

Telepathy shows Itself in Cases of Sensory Hallucination – Some of these are closely akin to Normal Psychological Phenomena

TELEPATHY, before Myers coined the word, used to be called "thought transference"; but the name unfortunately suggested that something was being transferred through space, and this put the inquirer's mind in the wrong attitude for understanding what really happens. Indeed, the word "telepathy," if taken literally, suggests the same thing, though not so obviously.

When we come to examine actual cases of telepathy, we shall see that we have to look for the explanation in a totally different direction. Let us begin by thinking of those despised things, "hallucinations." To many people the word "hallucination" suggests something false and deceptive, if not actually morbid. Do not people have hallucinations when they are drunk or in delirium? They do; but they also have them at other times when they are perfectly healthy. Little hallucinations occur quite commonly in daily life. Many people must have seen on an approaching bus the number of the one they are waiting for, only to discover afterwards that the number on it is really something else; or they may have seen persistently a word spelt right in a proof-sheet, when really it is spelt wrongly. It happened in my own experience that someone turned on the wireless and saw the dial light up for a moment and then go out. Inspection showed that the wireless was disconnected from the supply and could not have lit

up at all. The apparently lit dial was a hallucination caused by expectation.

Sometimes these symbolical creations are less trivial. Here is an example which occurred to Miss Ina Jephson, a very careful and reliable witness who noted down the occurrence at the time. On the morning of the 28th November, 1931, she received a letter from her lawyer, saying that he was enclosing a cheque for £10. As she was away from home, she had no time to acknowledge or deal with the cheque at the moment, so, she says: "I carried it about . . . peering into the envelope occasionally to see whether the cheque was safely there. . . . It was finally packed with special care and I had pleasing memories throughout the day of seeing the marbled pale colours of the cheque and the look of the writing on it." When she arrived home, Miss Jephson looked into the envelope but found no cheque there. She searched everywhere in vain, and at last wrote to her lawyer saying that she had lost it and asking him to stop payment. By return of post, he answered with an apology, saying that he had omitted to enclose the cheque but was enclosing it now. Miss Jephson says that she could hardly bring herself to believe that all this had been a hallucination. She adds: "If cross-examined in a court of law, I would have said with complete and absolute conviction that I had seen and handled the cheque in the first letter. . . ." In answer to a question, she said that there was nothing in her bag resembling a cheque.[1]

Here the hallucination affected the two senses of sight and touch and was indistinguishable from normal perception.

Mr. F. C. Constable, of Wick Court, near Bristol, an old and well-known member of the Society for Psychical Research, wrote in 1909 as follows: "I have frequently to walk from my house to the village club. The road outside the house runs, for perhaps twenty yards, with trees on one side and iron fencing on the other. Then comes a five-barred gate, which I have to open to pass through into an open field. The road is naturally very familiar to me. At nightfall, when on leaving the light of the house, I can at

[1] *Journal* of the S.P.R., Vol. xxvii, p. 184.

first see nothing and, later on, only the path very dimly, and objects dimly definite but at a yard or two, the following false visualisation is of almost common occurrence. I see the bars of the gate before me crossing my path before I come to the material gate. . . . This false visualisation has occurred, very possibly, twenty or thirty times during the last three years, and, carefully dissecting my experience, I am of opinion that the false visualisation is, to me, as real and definite as visualisation resulting from the material. I should perhaps state that this false visualisation is unique in my experience." Later Mr. Constable added: "Last night, walking to the club, I determined to 'bilk' the hallucination. As I walked I marked a tree on my right and said to myself: 'Now the gate is within three feet of me.' I looked. There was the gate. I walked to it. It was not there, but some six or seven feet distant. I looked again at the tree (remember it was but a dim shadow in the darkness) and saw I had mistaken it for another."[1]

In these experiences, the cause of the hallucination seems to have been a settled expectation. But hallucinations may have other causes. Sometimes they have a protective value, as in a case in which a person, who was about to step into an old-fashioned lift, stepped back because a figure suddenly appeared in the doorway. The figure vanished, and the percipient then saw that the lift was at the bottom of the well. A similar experience befell another person who was about to step over a dockside in the dark. It may be supposed in these cases that there has been a perception of the true state of affairs which has not reached consciousness.

Now let us consider this case. Mrs. Field (pseudonym) had the following experience. She was staying with her sister in January, 1939, when she received a letter from her daughter S, whom she had left at home. In this letter, she read aloud to her sister the words: "Nanny is in bed with bronchitis." She wrote at once to a second daughter, B, and told her this news. When she got home, she immediately asked her daughter S how Nanny was. "She's all right, I suppose," replied S. "But," said Mrs. Field, "you said she was in bed with bronchitis." "No," said S, "I

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xxi, p. 510.

never said such a thing." Thereupon they went to see Nanny and found her just up after being confined to bed by an attack of bronchitis. Not wishing to disturb Mrs. Field, whom she knew to be on holiday, she had kept the news to herself. She admitted, however, that she had greatly longed to see Mrs. Field in order to pour out her trouble. The letter was immediately referred to. "I knew exactly the place on the page where I had seen 'Nanny is in bed with bronchitis'; it wasn't there or anywhere else in the letter nor was there room in it for a single extra line."[1]

It will be seen how similar this case is to the "cheque" and "five-barred gate" cases, except that the cause of the hallucination is now an idea in *someone else's mind* and not in the mind of the percipient. Nanny's longing to impart the news of her illness to Mrs. Field caused Mrs. Field subconsciously to create an image of the words conveying the information, just as Miss Jephson's confident belief that a cheque was in her bag caused some subconscious factor in her to create an image of the cheque. The same sensory machinery is set in motion in both these cases, but in the case of Mrs. Field, it was set in motion by an impulse coming from someone's else mind. That makes the difference between a case of telepathy and a case of sensory auto-hallucination. Is it not absurd to accept the first two cases as normal and to reject the third as spooky and superstitious?

The signal sent to consciousness need not necessarily be visual as the following case shows.

In December, 1937, Mrs. E. E. West lost a ruby out of a gold ring while washing some articles in soapy water. Thinking that the ruby had gone down the drain, she gave it up for lost. The next morning, while in the same room, she seemed to hear someone say: "'What about the ruby?', and without thinking that I was alone, audibly replied: 'Oh, that's gone for good, it's no use troubling about that.' By that time I realised that I was replying to no visible person but, before I could think further, I seemed to be grasped by the shoulders and twisted round and the first thing my eyes rested upon was the ruby on the floor shining in a shaft of sunlight made by the outside door being open

[1] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. xxxi, p. 53.

a crack. I do not wish it to be thought that I felt my shoulders grasped, any more than I heard any particular person's voice, but that I was aware of myself as a person inside my body, but the same shape, which heard and felt quite well without my body."[1] The account was corroborated and questions were answered.

There is more elaborate signalling here. First a voice is heard asking a question; then a feeling of being taken by the shoulders and twisted in the right direction. There is no reason to suppose that these were anything more than self-created *sensations*. It is unlikely that Mrs. West was acted upon by any force from outside; she merely *felt* as if she were being moved. This shows that the signals sent by the subliminal self need not be sensory but may take the form of inner feelings or impulsions.

Some people seem to have great difficulty in grasping the idea of a sensory hallucination. Whenever a figure is seen apparently in space (especially the human figure) or a sound heard or a contact felt, they assume that there must be, resident in that part of space where the figure is seen, or felt, or the sound appears to come from, a physical cause. They seem to forget that when we see, hear or touch anything, our experience is actually confined to our own sensations. (I am over-simplifying at the expense of a technical inaccuracy. Some sensations admittedly have an objective counterpart, which is not a material thing.) If these sensations could be produced in some other way, not involving the external object at all, we should still have the experience of seeing, hearing or touching (even of tasting and smelling) objects, when, in fact, no external objects were there. One might have thought that this was obvious enough and that the fact that there are such things as sensory hallucinations (which no one denies) shows that this is precisely what can and does happen. But when someone has a visual hallucination, particularly of a human figure, people seem to regard it as proof that in some sense a human being, or some phase or part of a human being, is occupying the portion of space where the figure is seen. There is not the slightest need to assume this. The

[1] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. xxx, p. 181.

resources of the percipient's personality are quite capable of creating the *conscious experience* of seeing the figure, without any external, physical aid.

There may be a non-physical cause for the hallucination, or apparition, which is independent of the percipient. In the case of telepathic hallucinations, there certainly is. But the cause creates the conscious, visual or other perceptual experience, by acting on the percipient psychologically. In fact, it causes him to create his own experience. There is no centre of physical emanation in space.

Surely the absurdity of assuming that hallucinations are necessarily the results of external causes is patent. The sufferer from delirium tremens sees rats running on the floor which no one else can see. It would be preposterous to regard these as material rats with a short-lived existence. And it would be preposterous to suppose that a material cheque appeared in Miss Jephson's bag and then vanished; or that a material gate kept changing its position in Mr. Constable's field. The explanation of all these things is to be found in our apparatus of perception; not in the external world. That apparatus is partly psychological, and, as we shall see presently, has an astonishing power of creation. It is not commonly realised that an element of creation enters into ordinary, everyday perception, too. The view that external objects exist in space *exactly as we see them* is extremely difficult to maintain. We *must* provide a good deal of the environment which we commonly think of as simply there.[1]

In telepathy, then, a signal is made to consciousness by the subliminal self of the percipient, which may take the form of a sensory hallucination or may take some other form. The Society for Psychical Research has made a collection of such cases extending over more than half a century. Each case has been carefully scrutinised before publication, the first-hand account of the principal witness and the corroboration of other witnesses has been obtained, letters and contemporary documents examined, obituary notices checked and in many cases the witnesses personally interviewed. The number of cases passed as reliable runs

[1] See pp. 258–9.

into hundreds. Many more have been filed but not published on account of some evidential defect. No one who really wishes to know the truth about telepathy can ignore these cases, which are recorded in the *Proceedings* and *Journal* of the above-named society. I will quote one or two cases in abbreviated form as examples.

A certain Canon Bourne and his two daughters were out hunting, and the daughters decided to return home with the coachman while their father went on. "As we were turning to go home," say the two Miss Bournes in a joint account, "we distinctly saw my father waving his hat to us and signing us to follow him. He was on the side of a small hill, and there was a dip between him and us. My sister, the coachman and myself all recognised my father and also the horse. The horse looked so dirty and shaken that the coachman remarked he thought there had been a nasty accident. As my father waved his hat I clearly saw the Lincoln and Bennett mark inside, though from the distance we were apart it ought to have been utterly impossible for me to have seen it. . . . Fearing an accident, we hurried down the hill. From the nature of the ground we had to lose sight of my father, but it took us very few seconds to reach the place where we had seen him. When we got there, there was no sign of him anywhere, nor could we see anyone in sight at all. We rode about for some time looking for him but could not see or hear anything of him. We all reached home within a quarter of an hour of each other. My father then told us he had never been in the field, nor near the field in which we thought we saw him, the whole of that day. He had never waved to us and had met with no accident. My father was riding the only white horse that was out that day."[1]

The cause which set the telepathic machinery in motion in this case is obscure. No accident had happened to Canon Bourne. It more often happens that the vision coincides with some accident or peculiar event happening to the agent. In the next example this was the case.

The percipient was married and lived in India. Her half-brother, Eldred W. Bowyer-Bower, was an officer in

[1] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. vi. p. 129.

the R.F.C. In the early morning of 19th March, 1917, he was shot down and killed in France. "My brother," she says, "appeared to me on the 19th March, 1917. At the time I was either sewing or talking to my baby—I cannot remember quite what I was doing at that moment. The baby was on the bed. I had a very strong feeling that I must turn round; on doing so I saw my brother, Eldred W. Bowyer-Bower. Thinking he was alive and had been sent out to India, I was simply delighted to see him and turned round quickly to put baby in a safe place on the bed, so that I could go on talking to my brother, then turned again and put my hand out to him, when I found he was not there. I thought he was only joking, so I called him and looked everywhere I could think of looking. It was only when I could not find him that I became very frightened and the awful fear that he might be dead. I felt very sick and giddy. I think it was two o'clock the baby was christened and in the church I felt he was there, but I could not see him. Two weeks later I saw in the paper he was missing yet I could not bring myself to believe he had passed away."[1] Allowing for difference of time, the vision coincided very nearly with the time of the accident.

Both these cases illustrate the fact that the sensory hallucination signalling the telepathic event, though created by the percipient, is just as clear and life-like as a normal percept. It is, indeed, commonly mistaken for one at first. But the first of these cases illustrates another very remarkable property of telepathic hallucinations: occasionally they are *collective.* Three people simultaneously saw Canon Bourne on his white horse, and all with one accord moved towards the vision. Some people are inclined to think that collective vision (or perception) is proof of the physical objectivity of what is seen (or perceived). It is true that non-telepathic hallucinations do not seem to be shared. But, when once the idea has been grasped that a telepathic hallucination, though created by the percipient, is created in accordance with a pattern or theme orginated in someone else's mind, it is seen that there is no particular reason why this pattern should not be telepathically imposed on

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xxxiii, p. 170.

the mind of more than one percipient. Thus, we suppose that Canon Bourne unconsciously imposed the pattern or theme of his presence in that particular field, with details of horse, etc., on the minds of his two daughters and the coachman, and that all three thereupon constructed the same picture. We find this collective feature occurring in certain very interesting cases. Here is a more recent example.

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Pye were on holiday in Cornwall in 1933 and were travelling by bus from Wadebridge to Boscastle. As they neared Boscastle they both kept a good look-out for a suitable hotel in which to stay, and just before they reached the point at which the road drops steeply down into the village the bus stopped to set down a passenger. Mr. Pye writes: "It had come to rest almost outside the gates of a rather substantial house, standing on the left-hand side of the road. It stood back from the road some twenty yards or so, there being a semi-circular drive from the gate outside which we had stopped to another gate twenty-five yards further on. The garden front was screened from the road by a hedge over which we could just see from our seats in the bus. The house was double-fronted, and of a style of architecture which I judged to date from the late 1860s or early 1870s. It had a fresh, trim appearance, and seemed to have been recently painted, the woodwork and quoins of the house being of a rather reddish, light chocolate colour. The most striking feature, however, was on the lawn, where, amongst beds of scarlet geraniums, there were several wicker or cane chairs and tables over which there were standing large garden umbrellas of black and orange. No person was seen, nor do I recollect having seen any sign notifying that it was a guest-house, though I had no doubt that such was the case. I called my wife's attention to the place and she immediately replied that it was 'just what we were looking for' but, before we could come to any decision, the bus moved off and in two or three minutes we were down in Boscastle."

Mr. and Mrs. Pye were not very attracted by the village of Boscastle, so, while Mr. Pye stayed with the luggage, his wife walked back up the hill and tried to book rooms at

the guest-house they had seen from the bus. After nearly an hour and a half Mrs. Pye returned, looking considerably heated, and said she had not been able to find it. She had climbed various gates looking for it and had walked all the way back to Trevalga, and had finally succeeded in booking rooms at the guest-house there. She seemed much astonished, and Mr. Pye said he would point out the guest-house to her as they returned along the road. On the returning bus, just as they reached the top of the hill, Mr. Pye remarked: "'It's just here on the right—about fifty yards further on——', but to my astonishment there was no house. Just empty fields running across to the cliffs by Blackapit. During our stay at Trevalga, we made a thorough search of the locality, but failed to find any place even remotely resembling what we had seen. On a subsequent visit to the Trevalga guest-house, I told our experience to the proprietor, who assured me that from his knowledge there was in the neighbourhood no such house as I had described."[1]

There seems to have been no telepathic agent in this case apart from Mr. and Mrs. Pye themselves; but there certainly was telepathy between them. Possibly hopeful expectation of finding a suitable hotel was the primary cause of the incident. But the important point is that the subliminal impulse, whatever its cause, acted psychologically on *both* percipients so as to make them see the same thing. It is very important to know that this can happen. Those who hold that, if two or more persons see the same thing, that thing must have an independent existence, are wrong if by "independent existence" they mean independent existence in space. But they are not wholly wrong, for the psychological pattern which creates the two co-incident hallucinations may exist independently of the percipients in the mind of a third party: or it may, as apparently in this case, be merely the common subliminal possession of the two percipients. It might conceivably extend to more than two percipients. In Canon Bourne's case it extended to three. If one can imagine a pattern, originating in some mind, extending to a large number of percipients, then all

[1] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. xxxii, p. 174.

those percipients might be telepathically impressed to see the same scene. The scene would have no physical reality; but it would have a single cause which would be independent of all the percipients. And if their hallucinations were complete enough and sufficiently well correlated, they would almost certainly believe that the common cause resided in space and not in a psychological operator acting on their minds. These facts are worth pondering because, as we shall see presently, there are states of consciousness in which created sense-imagery becomes extraordinarily full, complete and vivid.

In a general book such as this there is no space in which to quote many cases. The reader may, perhaps, be interested in a publication entitled *Apparitions* (the seventh Myers Memorial Lecture, published for the Society for Psychical Research) in which more cases are given and the theory more fully discussed.

The evidence for telepathy does not rest entirely on cases of this description, though they turn out to be very cogent when carefully studied. Other sources of evidence amply prove the existence of telepathy to anyone who has not a strong *a priori* objection to it. Before going on to these, however, we will briefly consider what the evidence suggests with regard to *modus operandi.*

7

WHAT DOES TELEPATHY IMPLY?

Is Telepathy caused by Physical Radiation? – The Underlying Mystery

THE few cases of telepathy given in the last chapter were selected chiefly for the light they throw on its nature. There are many well-authenticated examples, and when the reader has perused the next few chapters, he will realise that much other evidence of a substantial kind also supports the reality of the phenomenon.

Supposing the reality of telepathy to be admitted, what does it imply? The view has been put forward above that in telepathy the percipient becomes aware of a *signal* created in order to inform the conscious mind that telepathy has occurred. But some people may object that there is no need for this roundabout hypothesis. Why cannot we suppose that an idea present in the conscious mind of A. is transferred to the conscious mind of B. by some process resembling that of radio-telephony? Why drag in the subliminal self? We read, for example, in a book entitled *The Evidence for the Supernatural* (p. 140), by Dr. Ivor Lloyd Tuckett (at one time a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge) that the admission of telepathy "means nothing more than believing in the existence of vibrations in the ether, resulting from and acting on nervous matter." This airy assumption ignores all reference to detail. Let us see what the view that telepathy is caused by physical radiation involves.

(1) In the first place, any such physical radiation would have to be generated by a material transmitter of some kind, which would presumably be located in the brain or body of the agent. Since telepathy is known to take place over long distances, such a transmitter would have to be powerful enough to send a message over some thousands of miles. It could scarcely, therefore, be of microscopic dimensions. No such transmitter has ever been found in

any human brain or body. A corresponding receiver would also have to exist in the body of the percipient B.; and that has never been discovered either. (2) All known physical radiation obeys the inverse square law connecting intensity with distance. There is no evidence that telepathy obeys this law. If it did, a person who could transmit a telepathic message across the ocean would produce an enormously more powerful effect across a table. This kind of thing has never been observed. (3) Physicists possess a variety of sensitive instruments for detecting different kinds of radiation; yet they have never detected telepathic radiation, which, if it were physical, would be unlikely to have escaped them. (4) A much more serious objection, however, lies in the fact that in order to transmit ideas by any physical means whatever, use has to be made of a pre-arranged *code*. Unless such a code exists and is understood by both parties beforehand, no information can be transmitted by physical means. Spoken language is a code; written language is another. Unless the person spoken to or written to understands the language, he can receive no information. Even gestures and facial expressions are a code. Every code requires to be *consciously* applied and *consciously* interpreted; so that a physical theory of telepathy necessitates not only the existence of material transmitters and receivers but a conscious agent at each end to operate them and to code and decode the messages. Systems of dots and dashes, or audible words spoken into a microphone are, of course, the usual ways of encoding telegraphic, telephonic and radio messages. It would be utterly absurd to suppose that some unseen demon within us speaks words aloud into a telepathic transmitter situated in our brain or elsewhere in our body; yet without some such supposition a physical theory of telepathy will not work. Even that would not explain the kind of telepathy which occurs in the cross-correspondences or with sensitives of Osty's type,[1] where something vastly more comprehensive than mere message-transmission is involved. Also, messages are often not transmitted literally at all. The *meaning* is transmitted clothed in symbolical form. Upholders of a physical

[1] See Chapters XVII and XX.

theory of telepathy have all these objections to meet before their view becomes plausible.

Taking these considerations together, it must, I think, be admitted that a physical theory of telepathy will not work. Let us think for a moment what this admission implies. A. can be in mental communication with B. (who may be many miles away) without making use of any kind of *physical link*. This fact at once raises the importance of telepathy to the *n*th power. How can a mental event occurring at one place influence a mental event occurring at another unless something traverses the intervening space; or, at any rate, unless there is some train of physical causes and effects linking the two places? The answer to this question makes telepathy a fact of superlative importance. The answer is that *nothing* travels between the two places, and no discoverable chain of physical causes and effects links them. Telepathy is a relation between the subliminal portions of two personalities; and there is no reason to suppose that space has anything to do with it. The subliminal portion of the personality can scarcely have any spatial characteristics. Why should it have? It has no shape, size or dimensions and therefore no position in space. Ah! someone may say; but it *has* a position in space, A.'s subliminal self is where A. is. But where is A.? Do not confuse A., the conscious being, with A.'s body of flesh. To say that A. is in the drawing-room is to talk loosely. A's *body* may be in the drawing-room: his brain may be there; but A. *himself*, who thinks and controls his body, is not in the drawing-room. Only something which has size (or spatial extension) can occupy a position in space; and we look in vain for any size or spatial extension attaching to A., the conscious being who thinks and acts. This conscious being exists, but has no position in space. Why, then, does he seem to himself to have a position in space? Why does he seem to be surveying the drawing-room *from* the doorway as he enters the room, if his conscious self is not in the doorway? The reason is because his eyes, sensory nerves, brain, etc., take in and register the view from that standpoint, where they, in fact, are. They are material things and have a definite position in space.

To take a rather imperfect analogy, suppose a person to be looking at the picture of a distant roadway on a television screen. It might seem to him that he was standing on that distant road, but he would have that impression, not because the television apparatus had transported his consciousness to the distant scene, but because it had affected his eyes in such a way as to produce the illusion that he was there.

If a mind, which is not anywhere, becomes conscious of a visual scene constructed so as to present the surroundings as from a particular point in space, it will have the illusion (which may be overwhelming) of itself *being* at that point of space. Well, if two subliminal selves, which are nowhere in space and have nothing to do with space, enter into a certain relation with one another, enabling knowledge to be shared, the fact of this sharing may be conveyed to consciousness by means of a representative picture. That the bodies of the two persons to whom the subliminal selves belong are at different places in space has nothing to do with the matter. But we begin by thinking of the *bodies* in space and pose ourselves a purely non-existent problem of how a message, supposed to originate at one place, can arrive at another place without traversing the intervening distance. The simple answer is that subliminal selves carry out the process of telepathy, and they are not spatially anywhere. What the nature of the subliminal relation is which gives rise to telepathy we do not know. How can we expect to know it when we know so little about the nature of the subliminal self?

With regard to the view that telepathy is signalled to consciousness by means of sensory hallucinations or motor impulses, it is worth while pointing out how purely *psychological* a sensory hallucination is. To go back to Miss Jephson's hallucinatory cheque (p. 58), no light from the surface of any cheque entered her eyes, the retina was not affected, the optic nerves were unaffected, the sensory tracts of the brain were not affected, yet her vision of the cheque was as precise and clear as if all these things had been happening. Perfect vision can evidently occur without any stimulus whatever from the external world and without any assistance from the receptor-organs; and

what is true of vision is true of the other senses as well.

The importance of telepathy lies in the fact that it reveals the subliminal portion of the human personality at work: and it shows that, where the subliminal portion is concerned, things happen in a very different way from that which we are accustomed to in our ordinary world. Hence, our ordinary world does not cover the whole range of existence.

Telepathy throws a gleam of light on the nature of things which no amount of study of the external world would ever have revealed.

8

FOREKNOWLEDGE

Some Examples of Spontaneous Cases of Foreknowledge

CAN we foretell the future? Of course we can and constantly do. All the arrangements of our lives are based on predictions of future events. Bradshaw, and every other time-table, is packed with prophecies from cover to cover. So are almanacs. We could not carry on our lives at all if we were not firmly convinced that the sun would rise to-morrow, that seed-time would be followed by harvest, that the tide would turn at such and such an hour, that Christmas would arrive, that trains would run to time (approximately) and so on. But note that these predictions depend on two things. In the first place, there are prophecies of natural events, such as the time of sunrise or high tide, or the season of harvest or the date of a solar eclipse. These are inferences based on observation of past events, which happen according to some regular law. Predictions of this kind about the future are made on the assumption that the law which has operated in the past will continue to do so in the future. In the second place, there are prophecies based on human intention. We base our arrangements on the time-table because we know that the railway company intends to run its trains at the published hours. But can we foresee events which we are unable to infer from past or present facts, and which are not the subject of human intention? We are inclined to say, emphatically, No! Apart from these two classes of events, we regard the future as being fluid and its events as undetermined. Some people might go so far as to say that this kind of knowledge of the future is a logical impossibility. At any rate it involves two very serious difficulties. In the first place it seems to force us to deny human freedom of will. In the second place it seems to abolish the principle of causality. How can an event which, because it

has not yet happened, does not exist, be the cause of our knowing about it? And what becomes of human freedom if we can see in advance the action of a person who has not yet decided what he is going to do?

Before saying more about the theoretical difficulties, let us, however, look at the factual side of the subject. Here is a selection of examples of apparent foreknowledge, taken principally from the records of the Society for Psychical Research.

The narrator of the first case was personally interviewed by Sir William F. Barrett, F.R.S. In January, 1887, Captain A. B. MacGowan, an officer in the American army, was on leave at Brooklyn with his two boys, then on vacation from school. "I promised the boys," he said, "that I would take them to the theatre that night and I engaged seats for us three. At the same time I had the opportunity to examine the interior of the theatre. I went over it carefully, stage and all. These seats were engaged the previous day, but on the day of the proposed visit it seemed as if a voice within me was constantly saying, 'Do not go to the theatre; take the boys back to school.' I could not keep these words out of my mind; they grew stronger and stronger and at noon I told my friends and the boys that we would not go to the theatre. My friends remonstrated with me, and said I was cruel to deprive the boys of a promised and unfamiliar pleasure to which they had looked forward, and I partly relented. But all the afternoon the words kept repeating themselves and impressing themselves upon me. That evening, less than an hour before the doors opened, I insisted on the boys going to New York with me and spending the night at a hotel convenient to the railroad, by which we could start in the early morning. I felt ashamed of the feeling that impelled me to act thus, but there seemed no escape from it. That night the theatre was destroyed by fire with a loss of some three hundred lives."

In conversation with Sir William Barrett, Captain MacGowan said that the voice was perfectly clear, "like someone talking inside me, it kept saying: 'Take the boys home, take the boys home.' And this from breakfast time till he took the boys away, shortly before the theatre opened.

He had never experienced anything like it before or since; never had any other hallucination. His sister has still got the tickets which he had bought and paid for. Three hundred and five people were burnt to death that night."[1]

The next case also comes from a long time ago. The account, first-hand by the principal witness, was published eighteen years after the event. It is corroborated by the landlady, by the witness's husband, and by the Miss W. whose life was saved. Both the last two asserted that their memory of the event was perfectly clear.

In July, 1860, the wife of the Rev. Dr. W., with her little daughter A. (names known) and a servant went to stay at Trinity, near Edinburgh. On Sunday afternoon the child went alone to play on a strip of ground between the railway and the sea wall, which was enclosed by a gate at each end. On this fine summer's day nothing apparently could have been safer. Soon after the child had gone, Mrs. W. reports that she "distinctly heard a voice, as it were, within me, say: 'Send for her back or something dreadful will happen to her'"; but reason rebelled and she refused to do so. The same thing recurred, the words being repeated with greater emphasis. Mrs. W. could only think that the child might possibly meet a mad dog; but she tried to throw off the feeling. Then the words were repeated for the third time, and a feeling of terror seized her. She rang the bell for the maid and sent her out to fetch the child in. Later in the afternoon, an engine ran off the line and crashed through the sea wall on to the rocks where the child admitted that she had been intending to sit. No sooner had the child been withdrawn from the dangerous spot than all feeling of anxiety passed away.[2]

The next case was described by the percipient to the Countess of Balfour. On 24th May, 1930, Mr. E. G. Eames, a surgeon, was driving his car from St. Albans to London. He was a fast driver, and was in a hurry to reach London, where he had several operations to perform. But a small car, driven in a leisurely manner, in front of him kept him back. There was nothing to prevent him

[1] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. I, p. 283.

[2] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. viii, p. 45.

from overtaking the car and passing it, as he would certainly have done on any other occasion; nor was there reason for any apprehension about the car, which was being driven soberly and well. "But on this occasion," he says, "I absolutely could not pass. Some exceedingly strong something insinuated into my subconscious brain that an accident was going to occur. It was definitely a force quite apart from, shall I say, earthly impressions." A lorry was proceeding just in front of the car which Mr. Eames was following, when suddenly, a stationary car opened its door and blocked the way for the lorry, causing it to stop abruptly. The small car following the lorry crashed into it, and two of the occupants, a child and his mother, were badly cut. Mr. Eames, by being on the spot, was able to attend to the injuries of the mother and child and to take them in his own car to a nearby hospital.

Mr. Eames adds at the end of his narrative: "This is the third time in my life that I have felt these strong compelling forces or influences warning me of danger, and always I have been afterwards very deeply grateful that I have been forewarned."

These are all cases of events which the experients could not easily forget: also they were all *waking* experiences, not dreams, and as such were rare or unique in the percipients' experience. This circumstance rules out for all practical purposes chance as an explanation.

The next is a dream-case, but the dream is *recurrent*. The husband and step-father of the narrator, Lady Q. (name known), corroborated the case. The main points were noted down soon after the event. As a child, Lady Q., having lost her father, and her mother having married again, went to live with an uncle, to whom she became very attached. She says: "In the spring of 1882 I dreamed that my sister and I were sitting in my uncle's drawing-room. In my dream it was a brilliant spring day, and from the window we saw quantities of flowers in the garden, many more than were in fact to be seen from that window. But over the garden there lay a thin covering of snow. I knew in my dream that my uncle had been found dead by the side of a certain bridle-path about three miles from the house—a field road where I had often ridden with him,

and along which he often rode when going to fish in a neighbouring lake. I knew that his horse was standing by him, and that he was wearing a dark, homespun suit of cloth made from the wool of a herd of black sheep which he kept. I knew that his body was being brought home in a wagon with two horses, with hay in the bottom and that we were waiting for his body to arrive. Then in my dream the wagon came to the door; and two men well known to me—one a gardener, the other a kennel huntsman, helped to carry the body upstairs, which were rather narrow. My uncle was a very tall and heavy man, and in my dream I saw the men carrying him with difficulty, and his left hand hanging down and striking against the banisters as the men mounted the stairs. This detail gave me in my dream an unreasonable horror."

Lady Q. slept no more that night and in the morning looked so changed and ill that her uncle asked what was the matter. She told him and begged him never to go alone by that particular road. Two years later the dream recurred "with all its details the same as before," and she told her uncle again. In May, 1888, she was in London, now married and expecting her baby, when the dream occurred for the third time. This time it was followed almost at once by her uncle's death. From her step-father and the old nurse she discovered that the details of the death were the same as those of the dream, even to the bruising of the hand as the body was being carried upstairs. She stated that she had had only two other impressive dreams in her life. Flowers and snow were for certain reasons symbolical in her family of death; and these seem to have been introduced into the dream to reinforce the death-prediction. This again shows how the dream is a form of expression built up to portray a deeper process to the conscious mind.[1] Altogether about six years passed between the first occurrence of the dream and its final fulfilment.

The next case, contributed by Lady Z., who was personally known to F. W. H. Myers, illustrates a curious feature about precognition. It is a first-hand account, but

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xi, p. 577.

is admittedly published without corroboration by other witnesses. But Myers sponsored it.

Lady Z. says: "We were living in about 188– in Hertford Street, Mayfair. One day I determined that on the morrow I would drive to Woolwich in our brougham, taking my little child and nurse to spend the day with a relation. During the night I had a painfully clear dream in vision of the brougham turning up one of the streets north of Piccadilly; and then of myself standing on the pavement and holding my child, our old coachman falling with his head on the road—his hat smashed in. This so much discomposed me that when in the morning I sent for the coachman to give him his orders, I almost hoped that some obstacle to the drive might arise, so that I might have an excuse for going by train. The coachman was an old and valued servant. I asked him if he would have the carriage ready to drive to Woolwich at ten. He was not given to making difficulties; but he hesitated, and when I suggested eleven instead he said that he would prefer that hour." When Piccadilly was reached on the homeward journey, Lady Z. saw the coachman leaning back in his seat as if the horse was pulling violently. As they turned up Down Street, the dream flashed back into her mind and she jumped out, caught hold of her child and called to a policeman, who caught the coachman as he was falling off the box. This intervention saved him from falling on his head on the road. The cause of the accident was that the coachman had been unwell that day.

Here, action, taken on the strength of *knowledge* of the dream, appears to have modified the events as they were foreseen. But I do not think that we must jump to the conclusion that an otherwise fixed future was thereby necessarily modified. These dreams are largely symbolical, and the dream-constructor often appears to take great liberties.

We now come to a case in which the event foreseen was of a kind quite foreign to the normal interests of the percipient. Mr. John H. Williams of Dulwich, a Quaker, woke on the morning of the 31st May, 1933, and dozed off again at 8.20 a.m. He then dreamed that he heard the radio announcer giving the names of the first four

winners of the Derby, which was to be run that day—Hyperion, King Salmon and two others, which he failed to remember. Mr. Williams was not familiar with the names of the horses, being an ardent opponent of betting, and perhaps this made it more difficult for the last two names to remain in his memory. He continues: "I had dreamed of listening in on the phones from a rather ancient crystal receiver and hearing the whole of the race from the start to 'around Tattenham Corner,' and in excited tones how Hyperion gained the lead and won, when I was disturbed." Between 11 and 11.30 that morning, Mr. Williams told three people about his dream. One, a neighbour, was "heard to relate in a restaurant long before the race what I had told him at 11 a.m." The two others, Mr. C. A. Young and Mr. W. E. Rowland Doughty, gave their signed statements that Mr. Williams related to them his dream on the morning of Derby Day. They say, however, that only the winner, Hyperion, was named; whereas Mr. Williams's impression was that he named to them the second horse, King Salmon, as well. Mr Williams was interviewed and, although an octogenarian, was regarded as a perfectly clear and excellent witness. Mr. Williams said: "I knew the crystal set was out of order but was so impressed with the seeming reality of the account that I resolved to put the set right and listen at 2 p.m. This I did and when the race was proceeding heard the identical expressions and names as in the dream."[1]

The next two cases were contributed by Dame Edith Lyttelton. On the 7th June, 1943, Miss Edge went to sleep between two and three o'clock, having asked her friend, Miss Swan (both are pseudonyms) to wake her at 4 p.m. On being awakened, Miss Edge "said that she had had a terrifying dream in which she had been to a place where someone was being mauled by lions, and that she herself had only just managed to climb to safety. Miss Swan, on hearing the details, said: 'You have been to the Zoo,' meaning in the dream experience." The next morning the papers contained accounts of a man having been mauled by lions at Whipsnade. In the report of the

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xxviii, p. 216.

inquest on Stenson, the man who was killed by the lions, *The Times* said that he got into conversation with a visitor named Myhill, who was having tea 'about four o'clock' and the two men went afterwards to see the lions. Then it was that the incident occurred which resulted in Stenson's death. It would seem therefore that the dream probably occurred a little before the event, but the coincidence in time must have been very close. This makes the theory of chance-coincidence the more improbable.[1]

A curious case occurred to Mrs. Fyson Calder, who had, in the course of her life, three precognitive dreams all of the same character, manifesting apparent foreknowledge of the house she was going to live in. The two earlier dreams were recorded before verification and are quoted by Dame Edith Lyttelton in her book, *Some Cases of Prediction* (G. Bell & Sons, Ltd.). This one was told by Mrs. Calder to her husband in the morning and is corroborated by him.

In this third instance Mrs. Calder dreamt that she was moving into a very large, old-fashioned house, and was busy hanging curtains at some extremely high windows. "I then wandered out," she continues, "through wild, neglected gardens, and found a kind of courtyard bounded by walls on three sides, and all rather neglected and overgrown, quite unlike any place I knew. I described all this to my husband next morning, and wondered if it meant another move for us. Strangely enough, a few days later he was offered a new post at Crewe, in Cheshire. I naturally supposed that the old house I had seen in my dream would prove to be there—as on previous occasions. As it happened, however, a parent visiting my husband's school a few days later mentioned that she was thinking of letting half her very large, old house, six miles away from here—hidden away in a park which we had never visited. Remembering my dream, my husband suggested that we should go and see it—and of course it was exactly as I have described, with the courtyard easily recognisable; very high windows, etc. Yet, at that time, we supposed that we should be going to Crewe, and it is the more remarkable that circumstances have now arisen causing my husband

[1] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. xxix, p. 2.

to refuse the move to Crewe and remain here. We felt so drawn to the old house seen in my dream that we have taken half of it and expect to move into it very shortly." This happened in 1938.[1]

The Hon. J. O'Connor (pseudonym) wrote on the 19th April, 1912, that on the 23rd March of that year he booked a passage to New York in the White Star liner *Titanic*. "About ten days," he says, "before she sailed I dreamt that I saw her floating on the sea keel upwards and her passengers and crew swimming around." He did not tell his friends for fear of alarming them, but next night the dream recurred. Still he said nothing but awaited a cable which he was expecting about business matters in America. The cable came, and suggested that he should postpone sailing. He therefore cancelled his ticket. This was rather more than a week before the date of sailing. He then told his dream to his wife and several friends. Three of these friends sent their signed testimony to the Society for Psychical Research that Mr. O'Connor had told them his dream before the *Titanic* sailed; and Mrs. O'Connor added her testimony in a personal interview. All four statements are printed in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research.[2] Mrs. O'Connor said: "He never dreams"; and was most emphatic that he had never had a dream of this kind before. Mr. O'Connor wrote that he had his ticket, cables, etc., in support of his statement and offered to send copies of them if required. The *Titanic* sailed from Southampton on the 10th April and was wrecked on 14th to 15th April, 1912. With regard to the question of chance-coincidence, it will be noticed that the dream recurred, which renders a chance explanation more difficult.

The following is of interest because it looks so like a case which the experient is about to fulfil by self-suggestion. It is taken from the note-book of the psychologist, Dr. Liébeault. A certain Monsieur de Ch. came to consult Dr. Liébeault on 7th January, 1886. On 26th December, 1879, this M. de Ch., when in Paris, had consulted a medium out of curiosity. She had said to him: "You will lose your

[1] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. xxx, p. 198.

[2] Vol. xv, pp. 265–8.

father in a year to this very day. You will soon be a soldier (he was then nineteen years old); but not for long. You will marry young, have two children, and die at twenty-six." His father had died on 27th December, 1880. He did become a soldier, but only for seven months. He also married and had two children. Now his twenty-sixth birthday was approaching and he was thoroughly alarmed and thought he had only a few days to live.

Dr. Liébeault, determined to get rid of his obsession, introduced him to a man who had foretold his own cure from long-standing rheumatism, and had also cured his daughter by suggestion. He tried to inspire the young M. de Ch. with confidence in him, apparently with success. This man, seeing the state of the case, told M. de Ch. impressively that he would die in forty-one years' time. "The effect was marvellous; the young man recovered his spirits, and when the 4th February had passed, he felt himself to be safe." An application of psychology had cured the credulous young man of his delusion and prevented him from frightening himself to death. Only one fact remains to be added. On 30th September, 1886, he died quite suddenly of peritonitis before his twenty-seventh year had quite passed, thus fulfilling the medium's prediction in spite of Liébeault's precautions![1]

I quote now a small precognitive case in order to illustrate the symbolical character of the means by which foreknowledge is sometimes presented to consciousness. A gifted sensitive, Miss Goodrich Freer, was touring with her friend, Mrs. T., in Scotland. "We were breakfasting alone, very early and somewhat hurriedly, on the morning of August 10th," she says, "having planned to take the coach to Glencoe, when I suddenly perceived a little red man dangling in the air, a foot or two away from my friend, and remarked upon the fact. She looked at the toast-rack and marmalade in front of her, and being used to odd statements on my part, asked: 'What kind of a red man?' As he continued his dangling I was able to describe him in detail. He was entirely red, and had the sort of outline of the little, jointed,

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xi. p. 528.

ivory figures one buys in the Soho bazaar. His arms were crooked abruptly upwards at the elbow, and he ceased a little above the knees. Mrs. T. could suggest no explanation, and we went our way, leaving him, so far as I knew, still dangling from an invisible string. We did not return till late in the afternoon, when Mrs. T., having entered the house first, met me as I came in at the front door, saying: 'There's your red man!' and showed me a letter she had just received marked *Immediate, to be forwarded*, and sealed in red wax with the impress of precisely the figure I had described. The letter had arrived by the first post, shortly after our departure, and was of consequence. We have kept the seal, which, so far as I am aware, I had never seen before."[1] The account is corroborated by Mrs. T. Note that, although this case is based on knowledge beforehand of the seal, no seal is presented to vision. A dramatic picture of a little man on a string is *created* to represent the salient facts about the figure.

Now we come to a case of a different kind. We must glance forward to Chapter 17. There we find an interesting case of precognition, amongst a few which were recorded by Mrs. Verrall in the course of a critical study of the development of her own automatic writing. She discovered that some of her scripts contained apparent references to future events. The following is one of them.

On 11th December, 1901, her script wrote:

> "Nothing too mean the trivial helps gives confidence. Hence this. Frost and a candle in the dim light Marmontel—he was reading on a sofa or in bed there was only a candle's light. She will surely remember this. The book was lent not his own—he talked about it."

Mrs. Verrall did not understand this. After referring to something else, the script did, however, attempt to write the name "Sidgwick." Accordingly she wrote and asked Mrs. Sidgwick if the allusion to Marmontel meant anything to her. The latter said it did not, but she would look out

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xi, p. 130.

to see if it was mentioned in some MSS. she was then reading. Mrs. Verrall's next script wrote:

> "I wanted to write Marmontel is right. It was a French book, a Memoir I think. Passy may help Souvenirs de Passy or Fleury. Marmontel was not on the cover—the book was bound and was lent—two volumes in old-fashioned binding and print. It is not in any paper—it is an attempt to make someone remember—an incident."

Mrs. Verrall adds: "Soon after my return to Cambridge, about December 25th, 1901, I was looking through a list of books—which I had glanced at before December 11th—and found an advertisement of 'Marmontel, *Moral Tales*, Selected and Translated by G. Saintsbury.' This, strange though such an admission may seem, was, as far as I could remember, my first conscious knowledge of Marmontel as a French writer."

In January, 1902, Mrs. Verrall wrote asking a friend, a Mr. Marsh, to come on a week-end visit, having had no other communication with him since June, 1901. He came on the 1st March and mentioned, during dinner, that he had been reading Marmontel, and that it was the *Memoir* and not the *Moral Tales*. In reply to a request for more particulars, Mr. Marsh said "that he got the book from the London Library and took the first volume to Paris with him, where he read it on the evening of February 20th and again on February 21st. On each occasion he read by the light of a candle, on the 20th he was in bed, on the 21st lying on two chairs. He talked about the book to the friends with whom he was staying in Paris. The weather was cold, but there was, he said, no frost. The London Library copy is bound, as most of their books are, not in modern binding, but the name 'Marmontel' is on the back of the volume. The edition has three volumes; in Paris Mr. Marsh had only one volume, but at the time of his visit to us he had read the second also.

"I asked him whether 'Passy' or 'Fleury' would help, and he replied that Fleury's name certainly occurred in the book, in a note; he was not sure about Passy, but under-

took to look it up on his return to town, and to ascertain, as he could by reference to the book, what part of the first volume he had been reading in Paris. He is in the habit of reading in bed, but has electric light in his bedroom at home, so that he had not read 'in bed or on a sofa by candle light' for months till he read Marmontel in Paris."

On his return to town Mr. Marsh wrote to me (March 4th, 1902) that on February 21st, while lying on two chairs, he read a chapter in the first volume of Marmontel's *Memoirs*, describing the finding at *Passy* of a panel, etc., connected with a story in which Fleury plays an important part. It will thus be noted that the script in December, 1901, describes (as past) an incident which actually occurred two and a half months later, in February, 1902—an incident which, at the time of writing, was not likely to have been foreseen by anyone.

No reasonable case can be made out for chance as an explanation of these coincidences. There is no mass of scripts referring to detailed incidents of this kind which have *not* corresponded with facts, such as there would have to be in order to provide a case for chance-coincidence. Nearly all cases of paranormal material contain errors or non-veridical matter. So it is in this case. Mrs. Verrall says: ". . . though the weather was cold it does not seem to have been actually freezing on either of the two nights in question; the book was not in two volumes only, as seems implied, though only two volumes had been read when the incident was related to me; the name Marmontel was on the back of the book, though not on the face of the cover; the binding, though not modern, can hardly be described as old-fashioned. But the reference to Passy and Fleury—names which, so far as I can discover, are not together in any passage of Marmontel's *Memoirs* except that read by Mr. Marsh on February 21st—is a precise and, I think, remarkable coincidence." The name of Mr. Marsh, which would have been the most convincing item, is not mentioned. Mrs. Verrall says that this is paralleled by other incidents in the script.

Some of the above cases of foreknowledge are old; but it must be remembered that a case is not necessarily evidentially weak because it occurred a long time ago. The

important question is, What was its evidential value when it was put on record? That value cannot logically alter after it is in print.

In an interesting analysis of the spontaneous cases of foreknowledge collected by the Society for Psychical Research, which was made by Mr. H. F. Saltmarsh in 1934, it was found that 349 cases existed which had been considered good enough for publication. Mr. Saltmarsh drastically criticised these and rejected 166 on the score of slight vaguenesses or other features he did not consider quite satisfactory. An irreducible core of 183 remained. There is also a mass of cases in the files which do not reach publication standard, and it must be remembered that the number of cases in which people observe the precautions necessary for evidence form only a small proportion of the total number which occur. There can be little doubt that if all the cases of telepathy and foreknowledge were properly evidenced and duly reported, the weight of evidence would be overwhelming. In any case a study of these 183 cases is indispensable for anyone who wishes to make up his mind regarding precognition.

I will now quote the experiences of two ladies who are personally known to me. I frankly confess that they do not meet the formal requirement of having been corroborated by independent witnesses prior to the occurrence of the events in question. The reader is therefore entitled to hold this fact against them. On the other hand, I can personally testify that both ladies are well acquainted with the canons of evidence and are alive to the possibility of failures and distortions of memory. Both are accurate and careful observers.

The first lady, Mrs. P., is highly trained in science and her published work has been utilised by the Government. She wrote the following account of her experience a fortnight after it occurred, in a letter dated May 16th, 1944. "About a fortnight ago R. [her husband] called me as usual about 8.15 a.m. and I went to sleep again and dreamed a very vivid dream. It is rare nowadays for me to remember dreams clearly on waking. In the dream I was sitting with some other people on the North Downs just above the house where I lived as a girl. The view is very familiar to me.

It was clear and the various points on the South Downs were clearly distinguishable. What we thought were bombs began to fall not far from us. Then we noticed flashes on the South Downs and decided that we were being shelled by distant guns, and decided it was gunnery practice and not enemy action. I rushed down the hill to 'phone to get the gunfire stopped but was told a civilian was not allowed to communicate with army officials direct. I remembered in the dream that our old house is now in use as an officers' mess and went there for assistance. But there were no officers, only a number of polite, uniformed women with Ambulances, who tried to be very helpful but also were not allowed to put through a 'phone call to get the gunfire stopped. I felt frantic because I thought the shells were likely to hit a bungalow in which was a young niece and her children. Then I woke up and dressed and at breakfast time still felt in a furious state of frustration because civilians could not communicate with those responsible for dangerous gunnery practice and get it stopped."

Mrs. P. told her husband she was late that morning because she had had a very thrilling dream; but she gave way to that unfortunate feeling (from the evidential point of view) which makes people disinclined to make a fuss about a dream, and she said no more. In the same letter Mrs. P. said: "The position on the South Downs where I saw the gun-flashes in my dream was between Shoreham Gap and Chanctonbury Ring, that is, above Steyning."

On the 14th May, 1944, shells which overshot their targets on a range on the South Downs fell in and around the village of Steyning, killing two persons and injuring others. *The Times* of 15th May, reporting the incident, said: "As soon as the first shell fell, efforts were made by the civil defence authorities to notify the authorities, but they were unable to get into touch with the units concerned." As a result, the shelling continued for an hour and a half before it could be stopped.

Now, this dream shows the same factor at work that we have seen in the telepathic cases. The dream itself was not a direct vision of a future event. The event of the shelling of Steyning, though, I think, unmistakably foreseen, is not inserted into the dream as it actually happened. The events

are distorted in an apparently deliberate fashion. The shells are represented as falling near Mrs. P., where she stood in her dream on the North Downs; and the guns firing the shells are located above Steyning. Why were the facts thus distorted? Because, apparently, the dream was multiply caused. One causal factor was foreknowledge of the shelling: another was Mrs. P.'s anxiety about her niece during the bombing raids. The two causes coalesce, and the shells are represented as endangering the niece. A third factor too, seems to have entered in, namely Mrs. P.'s memory of a familiar spot near her old home. This was seized upon as a locality for the danger-point, perhaps because it also affords a distant view of the gap in which lies Steyning. In reality the niece lived some twelve miles from the spot chosen in the dream, to which locality her house was displaced. Thus, the whole dream was a pramatic construction into which foreknowledge entered as only one factor. We should not, I think, look upon instances of foreknowledge as solely attempts to peep into the future, which fail in so far as they are wrong. We should realise that, as presented to consciousness, they are dramatic constructions and the constructor takes full advantage of artist's licence. When he goes wrong, it is because he adapts his material to the theme of the dream (or other form of presentation), just as a novelist adapts historical events to suit his story. Chance cannot, I think, be reasonably invoked in this case. The accidental shelling of a village is an almost unique event; and in this case the correct village entered into the dream. The impossibility of making contact with the military authorities was a notable feature both of the dream and the reality; moreover, the dream was no ordinary dream. As Mrs. P. states, the feeling of frustration and exasperation generated by the dream lasted for some time afterwards in the waking state, which does not happen with every dream we dream. These facts, taken together, rule out any reasonable hypothesis of chance.

The other lady, Mrs. G., has had at intervals during her life a number of apparently precognitive dreams. The following are two examples. In both cases the dreams were written down before fulfilment. The first occurred on 5th

August, 1937. Mrs. G. wrote: "I dreamt I was talking to a number of people in a street and saw A.A. through a gap in a broken wall, sitting in a cellar below ground-floor level. I told him he reminded me of the prison at Tangier (which was visible through a grating in the base of the outer wall). Somebody said something about 'May 10th' and I said: 'That is very significant and I will remember that date.'" On May 10th, 1941, A.A.'s house in E Street received a direct hit from a bomb and was completely destroyed except for the basement. He was not there. [Although initials only are given here, the full names were given in the dream.]

Again, we see the dramatic character of the dream. A.A., who was fortunately not in his house when it was hit, did not at any time sit in the cellar among the ruins, He was evidently placed there in the dream to indicate to whom the ruined house belonged. At the time of the dream (1937) Mrs. G. had no thought that the ruined house she saw had been wrecked by a bomb. Bombing did not occur to her. The day of the month on which the house was destroyed, given in the dream, makes chance-coincidence very unlikely, as the dream took place three years and nine months before the event when no one was thinking of bombed houses. May 10th, 1941, it will be remembered, was the date of a memorable air raid on London.

The second case is very brief. The dream occurred on 30th January, 1938. Mrs. G. wrote: "I dreamed I was lunching with C.W. who showed me a sore place in the palm of his hand which was peeling and rough and looked as if it had lately had sticking plaster on it. On February 3rd, 1938, I was lunching with G.R. (not C.W.), who showed me a sore place in the palm of each hand which was peeling and rough. He told me it was a form of eczema and had been giving him a lot of trouble."

Such an unusual complaint in that particular spot can scarcely have coincided with the fact by chance.

The person concerned was changed by the dream-constructor—for what reason does not appear.

Mrs. G. has had several other similarly verified dreams, which cannot be quoted for lack of space. Enough has

perhaps been said to show that a good deal more than a *prima facie* case exists for precognition or non-inferential foreknowledge in the accumulated evidence of which the above are samples. Any critic who seriously maintains that the whole of this evidence can be explained by chance-coincidence or in some other normal way has to show that his hypothesis applies to all the evidence in detail. If he does not do this there is no need to take his contention seriously. General remarks about chance or inaccuracy of observation or memory and so forth do not carry the slightest weight unless they go into detail.

After considering the theoretical side of precognition, we shall return to the evidence and show that there is more of it of a very striking kind.

9

WHAT DOES FOREKNOWLEDGE IMPLY?

Some Theories about Precognition.—But its Difficulties remain Unsolved

ASSUMING that precognition exists, what is its theoretical significance? One feature has already been stressed. In precognition, the *conscious* mind does not voyage into the future, just as in memory it does not voyage into the past. In both cases, the conscious mind becomes aware of an image or symbol of some kind, created here and now to *represent* the future or the past. The symbol in the case of precognition may be sensory, as in visual hallucination or dream, or it may be motor, as in automatic writing or trance utterance. These *ad hoc* creations do not slavishly copy the events they stand for; they are often inaccurate, apparently for two reasons. (1) Because the representative creation is dramatic in character, and the creator uses artist's licence or frank symbolism. (2) Because the representative creation is often multiply caused, the factor relating to the future is adjusted so as to fit in with the rest of the theme. In the case of memory, past events are represented by faint images created in the present; and these, too, are far from portraying past events as they actually were or must have been. Everyone knows how the memory-image of even the most familiar scene is found to differ from the reality when we test it, and therefore differs from what must have been past sensory experience.

The fact that, in precognition, the conscious mind does not journey into the future does not, of course, explain the phenomenon. Knowledge of the future event must be acquired in some way or it could not be presented to consciousness at all. It seems clear that it is the subliminal self, or some department of it, which acquires knowledge of the future, though we are totally ignorant of how it does it.

Attempts have been made to explain the mystery of

precognition, one of which has attracted considerable public attention. Mr. J. W. Dunne offered an explanation in his book, *An Experiment with Time*, and subsequently developed it further in other volumes. Incidentally, he gave in this book a few examples of precognitive dreams. Mr. Dunne's theory appears to be based on a suggestion put forward by Hinton in a book called *The Fourth Dimension*. The nucleus of the idea is that the world of three spatial dimensions is conceived as extending also in a fourth spatial dimension. Human beings are only perceptually conscious at any moment of a three-dimensional cross-section of this four-dimensional world. But as moment succeeds moment they become aware consecutively of another and another three-dimensional cross-section, so that in effect they seem to travel along the fourth dimension of the manifold. This "travelling" consists only in a progressive transference of the attention, or awareness, to successive cross-sections. The effect of perceiving this series of cross-sections, each of which differs to a certain extent from that preceding it, produces the illusion that there is a three-dimensional world enduring in time and that parts of it are in motion, just as the rapid succession of pictures on the cinema screen produces the illusion of moving figures. Thus, the idea of time arises from the continuous progress of the observer's attention through a static world of four dimensions.

The difficulty then arises that this continuous transference of attention is itself a temporal process, and a time is needed for it to occur in. The illusory time arising out of this process itself clearly cannot provide the time in which the process occurs; therefore Mr. Dunne is obliged to postulate a separate time for this. To acquire this separate time, he adds a fifth spatial dimension to the manifold, and postulates a second consciousness "travelling" along it. But then he encounters the same difficulty again, and is obliged to introduce a sixth spatial dimension and a third consciousness. This requires another and yet another, and so on. An indefinite number of spatial dimensions and observing consciousnesses have to be added, and the unsolved problem of time keeps flying away ahead of them all. Mr. Dunne's universe becomes "serial" and his problem an infinite regress. Precognition is possible in such a world

because time is unreal. Everything is "there" and the problem is a cognitive one. It is necessary to follow this praiseworthy and courageous attack on the problems of time and precognition in Mr. Dunne's own exposition. No adequate account can be compressed into the present volume.

The theory has been effectively criticised by Professor C. D. Broad.[1] Mr. Dunne does not appear to maintain consistently the distinction between mind and brain. Professor Broad points out that he begins by recognising the distinction between "presentations" (i.e. sense images, bodily feelings, etc.) and the geometrical characteristics of the manifold, and by assuming a one-to-one correlation between the two, but this distinction "seems to drop out of sight in the formal exposition of the theory." Again, some of the entities which Mr. Dunne postulates (e.g. the "reagent," which is said to confine the observer's field of view) do not appear to correspond with any concrete realities in nature. Moreover, Mr. Dunne freely speaks of the last term of his series of observers as an "observer at infinity," whereas the salient fact about an infinite series is that it has no last term.

However, Professor Broad says: "If I thought, as Mr. Dunne seems to do, that I should have to postulate an unending series of dimensions and then an 'observer at infinity' (who would plainly have to be the last term of a series which, by hypothesis, could have no last term) I should, of course, reject this alternative as nonsensical. But it is certain that these extravagances are not needed in order to account for the possibility of veridical, ostensible foreseeing on the lines of Mr. Dunne's theory. For this purpose, five, and only five, spatial dimensions are needed. The fallacy which caused Mr. Dunne to embark on his wild-goose chase after the 'observer at infinity' can easily be detected and avoided."[2] He also says: "There is nothing in the least fantastic in the hypothesis of more than three *spatial* dimensions, as in Mr. Dunne's theory. But the

[1] *Philosophy*, Vol. x, No. 38, pp. 168–85.

[2] *Knowledge and Foreknowledge*, Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. xvi, 1937, p. 199.

suggestion that *time* may have more than one dimension may be simply nonsensical. Certainly it ought not to be lightly admitted into society merely on the dubious claim to kinship with perfectly respectable hypotheses about additional space-dimensions."[1]

The question whether any theory making use of additional space-dimensions can solve the problem of precognition, I leave to the reader to decide. The suggestions which Professor Broad has tentatively put forward, and a criticism of them by Professor H. H. Price, will be found in the Supplementary volume of the *Proceedings* of the Aristotelian Society mentioned above.[2]

A suggestion, put forward by Mr. H. F. Saltmarsh, should here be mentioned. It hinges on the idea of the "specious present." He points out that the present moment is assumed by mathematicians and physicists to be a point-instant. Psychologists, however, recognise that in sense-experience the present moment covers a short but definite period of duration; and this they call the "specious present." Mr. Saltmarsh, recognising that the fundamental process of extra-sensory perception takes place in the subliminal self and not in normal consciousness, has suggested that the specious present of the subliminal region may cover a much longer period than that of the conscious region. Specious presents, which for consciousness were distinct from one another, might thus overlap and coalesce in the subliminal region; and events which present themselves to consciousness might, for the subliminal self, be co-present with one another. In the extensive co-present of the subliminal region, there might exist knowledge of two events which would both be in the present for the subliminal, one of which would be in the future for consciousness. On the assumption that knowledge of any event contained in the specious present of the subliminal could be passed to consciousness, it would, according to this reasoning, be possible for consciousness to become aware of an event which, to it, was in the future. This theory,

[1] *Ibid.* p. 203.

[2] Published by Harrison and Sons, 45, St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C.2.

however, encounters difficulties also. The great problem for all theories is how a future event can be directly apprehended when it has not yet come into existence. If we take the view that events are just "there" and we come across them, we get into other difficulties, as Mr. Dunne did.

The other great difficulty which any theory of precognition has to face is human freedom of will. If we are free to determine certain events, how can those events be foreseen before we have determined them? We think of such events as being non-existent, in any and every sense of the word, before the action has been taken which brings them about. If precognition dealt only with events to which human volition and living action do not apply, we might admit that such events are pre-determined. We should still be faced with a cognitive difficulty, but this would not be quite such a formidable difficulty as that presented by events of the humanly determined kind.

The evidence of our cases of precognition goes to show that events brought about by human volition *are* predictable. When we come to ask ourselves more exactly what we mean by the exercise of free choice, the answer is not so easy. Do we mean by a "free" choice a choice which is not determined by *anything*? But would not such a choice be completely wild, meaningless and irrelevant? Yet, on the other hand, if our choice is determined by certain factors, is it completely free? Do we really know what we mean by "free-will"? In any case, are not many of our "free" actions actually determined by habit or psychological disposition rather than by free, rational choosing?

McTaggart seems in effect to have denied the reality of time, holding that series which in themselves are non-temporal are grasped as temporal. Regarding the human observer as existing throughout past and future time, McTaggart thought of the observer as being at all moments aware of the same set of objects, the only change being from confused to clear awareness in consciousness. If consciousness were to become clear with regard to some object for which it would normally be confused, that might account for precognition or retrocognition. It seems that Professor Broad, in his criticism of McTaggart's philosophy, holds

that unless some *real* temporal transition occurs, there could not be the appearance of it.

Bergson took the very interesting view that awareness is an intrinsic characteristic of mind. On this view, one does not have to ask how consciousness becomes aware of things, but how its awareness comes to be limited and not universal. This hypothesis of Bergson's, whether true in an extreme form or not, has the merit of turning our faces in the right direction. The subliminal self does seem to behave as if it possessed something more like pan-awareness than does the supra-liminal self. The phenomena of inspiration, genius and mysticism all suggest it. The conscious mind, hedged about by limitations, struggles to string into a temporal sequence thoughts which seem to be present in the subliminal in a kind of altogetherness.

It is very hard to resist the view that the subliminal self exists outside temporal conditions as we know them, or, at any rate, exists in a different kind of time. Time, as we know it, may be a special condition applying only to the physical world or to our conscious appreciation of it. It may be a local thing in the scheme of the universe and neither central nor fundamental. In that case, precognition may arise from a state of affairs which our minds, specially constructed as they are to deal with a special world, are totally unable to grasp. In trying to form a theory of precognition, we may be attempting to run before we can walk. It seems to me doubtful whether any real progress has yet been made towards understanding precognition. The lesson which emerges is that there is far more in the universe than we have supposed, and that our minds are far more limited than innate human conceit cares to admit. Perhaps we ought to try to understand some of the characteristics of the subliminal self before tackling the problems of time and precognition.

V

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH IN THE LABORATORY

10

CHANCE

What Can, and What Cannot, be Reasonably Attributed to Chance?

CHANCE is a difficult but important subject in psychical research. In the present chapter, I shall not attempt to embark on the mathematics or metaphysics of chance, but shall only try to clear the ground with regard to certain practical issues.

In spontaneous cases of telepathy and foreknowledge, the force of the evidence frequently depends on the coincidence between a dream (or similar occurrence) and an event in the external world. If there is a causal connection between the event and the dream, while the circumstances rule out all normal types of causal connection, then the coincidence is evidence for telepathy, or, it may be, for foreknowledge. But suppose that the coincidence is not causal but is due to chance? How are we to decide this point? In everyday life we decide whether to accept or to rule out chance on common-sense grounds; and, roughly, we do so with success. There is often room in such decisions for differences of opinion, but in practical life common-sense estimations of chance work pretty well. The reason for this is that in most of the affairs of common life people are in general agreement as to the likelihood of the possible alternatives to chance. If a case arises in which the only alternative is something which is regarded, on independent grounds, as being extremely improbable, then people will credit chance with feats which they would scout as ridiculous in any other connection. Thus, there is no

fixed standard of what may be "reasonably" attributed to chance.

Chance certainly does occasionally bring off some astonishing hits. It is related, for example (though I cannot guarantee the authenticity of the story), that the brother of a woman who lived in the Hebrides went to West Africa and, while there, idly carved his name on a piece of wood and threw it into the sea. Months later, his sister, walking on the shore of her native island, picked up the piece of wood, which had been washed up there by the tide. Whether the story is true or not, it is certainly a fact that this sort of thing does occasionally happen. But when it does, the chance-coincidence is almost always *isolated.* One does not come across a true story of a string of such coincidences. If the man in this story had had two companions, and all three had carved their names on pieces of wood and thrown them into the sea, and each man's sister had then picked up the appropriate piece of wood on her own particular part of the shore of Britain, we should firmly reject the story. In psychical research, however, we not infrequently find such multiple coincidences. Here is an example.

This case comes from a reliable Belgian correspondent, who, besides obtaining the first-hand statements of the percipients, interviewed them personally and vouched for their reliability.

"On the 7th October, 1938, Monsieur X [the real names are all known] attended a reception at the house of Madame Y in Brussels. He left at 10.30 p.m. The same night Madame Y had the following dream: She is at the railway station with a gentleman (unknown); several friends see her off, including Monsieur X. Suddenly the train starts, and Madame Y leaves without having time to take all her luggage. She calls through the open window to Monsieur X: 'Please bring me my luggage and don't forget the yellow suit-case.' Arrived at her destination, she goes upstairs to the luggage depot and finds all her luggage except the yellow suit-case. Monsieur X is there, too, and the lady severely rebukes him for his negligence.

"The next morning, 8th October, 1938, Madame Y related her dream to a witness, Monsieur Z; and an hour or so

afterwards, while Monsieur Z was still present, Monsieur X arrived and before anything was said to him about Madame Y's dream, he recounted his own dream of the previous night, which was as follows: He finds himself at a station and in charge of Madame Y's luggage. A yellow suit-case is specially recommended to his care. He transports all this with great pains, but the yellow suit-case is somehow lost. He mounts the stairs to the luggage depot and there meets Madame Y. She gives him a severe scolding for his bad behaviour."

Madame Y adds a further signed statement in which she says: "I told Monsieur Z about my dream before hearing Monsieur X's statement, and the latter, in turn, related his dream to Monsieur Z before hearing my description." She actually had a yellow suit-case, but Monsieur X was not sure whether he had ever seen it.

A careless or biased critic might say that Monsieur X and Madame Y both happened to dream about luggage on the same night, and that the coincidence was due to chance. Perhaps he might add that both had a natural obsession about luggage and frequently dreamed about it. A Freudian might even discover that luggage has some sexual significance. But, even if all this were true, it would not suffice to establish a reasonable case for chance as an explanation of these coincident dreams. For it was not merely that two percipients dreamed about luggage on the same night: their dreams coincided in seven distinct points. (1) In both cases it was Madame Y's luggage; (2) In both cases Monsieur X was given special charge of it; (3) In both cases a yellow suit-case was specially mentioned; (4) In both cases Monsieur X and Madame Y met at the luggage depot; (5) In both cases the luggage depot was upstairs; (6) In both cases the yellow suit-case was lost; (7) In both cases Monsieur X was scolded by Madame Y for losing it.

The chance-explanation of coincident dreams is based on the assumption that people frequently have similar dreams which do not coincide in date and so are forgotten or ignored. Only when they happen to coincide in date are they remembered. (Notice, however, that in this case the dreams were recounted before anyone knew that they had

coincided.) The chance-explanation of the case would involve the assumption that Monsieur X and Madame Y frequently had dreams *coinciding in all these seven features*, but that they were forgotten until they happened to occur on the same night. It is only necessary to state clearly what the chance-hypothesis involves to see how utterly unplausible it is.

It may be said with confidence that no one can explain the well-attested cases of telepathy and precognition by the hypothesis of chance unless he regards chance as being a totally different kind of thing where psychical research is concerned from what it is in every other connection. But critics of psychical research seldom face detailed facts.

Now let us consider chance in connection with the quantitative type of experiment. Suppose we spin a coin which has no bias; it is agreed, is it not, that it is equally likely to fall heads or tails up? But what do we mean by the words "equally likely"? Do we mean that if we spin the coin, say, six times, we can be sure that it will fall three times heads and three times tails? No. It might do so; but it might fall four times heads and twice tails or five times tails and once heads or six times heads or six times tails and so on. We cannot tell how the falls will arrange themselves. What, then, do we mean by saying that the coin is "equally likely" to fall heads or tails? The meaning is this. If we go on spinning the coin an indefinite number of times, the longer we go on the more nearly will half the falls be heads and half the falls be tails. If we could spin the coin a million times, we should find that the number of heads and the number of tails were each extremely near to half a million. This is the meaning of "equally likely."

Suppose that the coin has fallen five times heads, is it as likely to fall heads as tails on the sixth occasion? We have a feeling that the sixth time it is more likely to fall tails; but this is not so. It is as likely to fall heads as tails on the sixth occasion, for the spins are all independent of one another and there is nothing to distinguish the sixth spin from the first. What we are perhaps thinking of is the improbability of a long, consecutive *series* of heads occurring. Let us express the probability of a fall in figures. The probability of an unbiased coin falling heads

or tails is $\frac{1}{2}$. The probability of its falling heads (or tails) twice running is $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = (\frac{1}{2})^2 = \frac{1}{4}$. The probability of its falling heads (or tails) six times running is $(\frac{1}{2})^6 = \frac{1}{64}$. That is to say odds against a run of six consecutive heads (or tails) are 64 to 1. But, nevertheless, each individual spin is as likely to fall heads as tails.

Similar reasoning applies to other comparable things, as for example an unbiased die. When the die is properly thrown, any one of its six faces is equally likely to turn up, that is to say the probability of any face turning up is $\frac{1}{6}$. Similarly, with cards, such as are used for experiments in telepathy and extra-sensory perception. Playing-cards are not very suitable for such experiments because they are too complex and have too many ways of partially corresponding. Special and simpler kinds of cards are therefore generally used. One type, which has been largely employed, consists of cards bearing five simple diagrams, a circle, a cross, parallel wavy lines, a rectangle and a star. Such cards, called "Zener" cards, from their inventor, have been employed in many thousands of trials by Prof. J. B. Rhine and other experimenters.

One can easily see that if five such cards, each bearing one of the above designs, were shuffled and placed in a row face downwards before a person, the probability of his guessing a card correctly by pure chance would be $\frac{1}{5}$; for the card he points to is equally likely to be any one of the five designs and only one of them can be right. For practical purposes a pack of many more than five cards is needed, and this is provided by using several cards of each kind. We could, for example, have a pack of 50 cards containing 10 of each kind. If such a pack of 50 were shuffled and laid face downwards before the guesser, the probability of his guessing a card right by chance would still be $\frac{1}{5}$, for his chance of being right is now 10 in 50. Instead of spreading the whole pack out before the guesser, it can of course be shuffled and the cards dealt out one at a time. Suppose we wish to use such a pack for testing telepathy, all we have to do is to shuffle the pack thoroughly, keeping the faces of the cards invisible; then get someone to turn up the cards one at a time, looking at each and recording it. Meanwhile, the

guesser records his guess. Of course careful precautions must be taken to make sure that the guesser can get no sensory clue as to what the cards are. He should not even see their backs. The best plan is to place a large, opaque screen between the guesser and the cards, or to place the guesser in another room. We must also forbid the agent who looks at the cards, to speak during the course of the experiment. If the guesser has no telepathic faculty, the successes he scores will all be due to chance. We know that the *chance-expectation* of success is $\frac{1}{5}$; but, as with the spinning of the coin, we cannot say that exactly one-fifth of the guesses will be right. We cannot tell, in fact, how many successes chance will produce. Out of 100 trials we know that the *chance-expectation* of success is 20; but we cannot say that exactly twenty successes *will* be scored. Chance *might* produce 10 or 20 or 25 or 30 or any number from 0 to 100. How, then, are we to decide whether telepathy has been at work? We cannot say *for certain.* Statistics do not permit us to state our conclusion as a certainty but only as a probability. It is easy to see that the further the number of successes in 100 trials deviates from 20, either above or below, the more unlikely it is that chance has produced them all. The excess over chance-expectation (or the defect below chance-expectation) is called the "deviation." Thus, if 20 is the chance-expectation and we actually score 25, there is a positive deviation of 5. If we actually score 15, there is a negative deviation of 5. What statistical mathematics does is to tell us *how probable it is that our deviation is due to chance.*

An actual example may be instructive. Out of 1,000 guesses with Zener cards, a person scored 228 successes. Does this give any reasonable evidence of telepathy? The chance-expectation of success is 200; there is therefore a positive deviation of 28. We know that these 28 successes *could* have been produced by chance; but how *likely* is it that they were? Applying the formula supplied by the calculus of probabilities, we find that the probability of this deviation of 28 being due to chance is 0·013, that is to say the odds against chance are 77 to 1. It would be unsuitable here to go into the mathematics and show how

the figure 0·013 is arrived at. Statistics are a standard branch of mathematics and the reader who wishes to do so can study them separately. But we are still left with a problem on our hands. We know that the odds against our deviation being due to chance are 77 to 1; but does that make chance reasonably untenable? In ordinary scientific work, chance is not often regarded as a reasonable explanation if the odds against it are more than 20 to 1; and this is called the Point of Significance. If the odds are more than 20 to 1 the result is said to be significant. According to that, odds of 77 to 1 against chance are significant evidence for telepathy (which I am assuming to be the only alternative). But the point of significance is a matter of arbitrary agreement, and if anyone insists on using a higher point of significance there is nothing to prevent him. Thus, in statistics, we can never get rid of the fact that the point of significance is arbitrary.

This fact may or may not be important in psychical research. If, in an experiment, the odds against chance turn out to be very high—thousands or tens of thousands or even millions to one against chance—then it does not greatly matter where the point of significance is fixed. No one outside a lunatic asylum would hold chance to be the explanation with such figures as that. But if the odds against chance turn out to be near the significance point, then it may matter where that point is fixed. One might of course say that what is conventional in ordinary science should apply also to psychical research. But people are not always inclined to do this. Telepathy and precognition are regarded by most scientific people as being, antecedently, highly improbable: therefore they sometimes think that a higher than customary point of significance should be used. But the reasoning of critics on this matter is very vague and variable. How high should the point of significance be fixed? That depends on how improbable, on independent grounds, one thinks telepathy and precognition are. If every individual were to fix his own point of significance in accordance with his personal views on this subject, there would cease to be any public or objective standard. Yet surely a case can be made out for the legitimacy of this procedure. The more unlikely we regard a thing as being, the

more evidence we demand to establish it. It does not require very strong evidence to convince us that a schoolboy performed a step-dance on the classroom dais a minute before the master arrived; it takes a good deal to convince us that the master performed one a minute afterwards. Are we not justified in demanding a higher point of significance if we think that telepathy or precognition is highly improbable? And anyone who thinks that they are next door to impossible might prefer the explanation of chance, even if the odds against it were thousands to one! This question of antecedent improbability is really the crux of the whole matter. It is precisely the sense of improbability which has turned the scientific world against psychical research and caused it to refuse to consider the evidence. The critic who is convinced that paranormal phenomena almost *cannot* occur is not prepared to listen to rational arguments but looks out for ways of escape. We should really go straight to the root of the matter and ask the critic to state exactly *why* he thinks these phenomena are so unlikely.

Fortunately, many of the quantitative experiments in extra-sensory perception have yielded results so enormously far above chance that the point of significance is unimportant.

Returning to the qualitative side of the subject, it is worth while making a few remarks about statistical arguments based on selected classes. Dreams, hallucinations, impulses and even statements by mediums frequently correspond with external facts or events and raise the question whether these correspondences are due to chance. Sometimes it is possible to apply statistics in a rough way to this question. For example, if A dreams one night of his uncle's death, and his uncle actually dies on that night, there is a coincidence. Is it due to telepathy or chance? It has already been pointed out that if the dream contains a number of independently fulfilled details, chance is much more unlikely to be the explanation than if the dream contains one incident only. That is obvious; but there is another consideration. Suppose we have to deal with one incident only—perhaps with a dream of death corresponding with the fact of death—we might make a rough estimate of how likely the coincidence is to occur by chance

by estimating how many times in his life A dreamed of his uncle's death when it did not occur. We are then faced by this question: Was the dream which corresponded with the death of the uncle in the same *class* with the dreams which did not? If we examine a number of cases carefully, we find that the great majority of dreams which appear to be telepathic differ from ordinary dreams by being much more powerful, vivid and impressive. Often they cause the dreamer to take actions which ordinary dreams do not cause him to take. Mrs. P.'s dream about the shelling of Steyning in Chapter 8, for example, was not an ordinary dream. If this is so more or less all through, we have no right to place these dreams in the same class with ordinary dreams for statistical purposes. If we do, we shall deceive ourselves with false numerical results. Before applying statistics, we must be sure that we are dealing with true, that is to say relevant, classes.

To illustrate this important fact more clearly, let us take an example. Suppose we have fifty red billiard balls and fifty white ones. Five of the white balls are made of ivory and all the rest of the balls are of composition. Someone is then asked to say what is the probability, if all the balls are put into a bag and shaken up, of drawing a white ivory ball. Glancing at them casually, he says that the probability is $\frac{1}{2}$. When told that he is wrong and that the probability of drawing a white, ivory ball is $\frac{1}{20}$, he answers: Oh, well; all the white balls *look* much the same! This is very similar to the procedure of the person who asserts, because of the large number of dreams which take place, that it is reasonable to assume that the coincidences observed in what appear to be telepathic dreams are due to chance. He waves away the detail that there are different classes of dreams as not worth considering.

It may be added that in all cases where statistics are applied to phenomena whose main features are qualitative, great care must be taken over the assumptions which are made before the figures are applied, otherwise quite erroneous conclusions may easily be drawn from a convincing-looking mathematical argument.

11

EARLIER EXPERIMENTAL WORK

The Experimental Background of Psychical Research

One of the chief aims of science is to proceed from observation to experiment. It is unfortunate that in psychical research a difficulty arises which is absent in physical science. The material is a human subject, and experiments cannot be made without the subject's knowledge. The element of self-consciousness is apt to be, as one writer has put it, "fatally destructive of those conditions which it is most useful to observe." The sensitive who feels free and unwatched will have all kinds of interesting "hunches," which are liable to disappear the moment they are made the subject of experiment. Thus the conditions of experiment alter that which is experimented upon.

Science need not be experimental; it may be observational, as in astronomy and geology: but experiment is highly desirable whenever it is possible without defeating its own ends. Observation in psychical research has a great deal to teach us; but perhaps a mixture of observation and experiment is the goal towards which the subject will ultimately tend. At the present time the demand is for the type of experiment used in the psychological or physical laboratory, which is designed to keep the control entirely in the hands of the experimenter. Fortunately the attempts which have been made with this type of experiment have met with considerable success.

Experimental work in psychical research may be roughly divided into qualitative and quantitative, though a hard distinction cannot be definitely drawn. Sometimes numerical estimates are inserted into otherwise qualitative experiments. A brief summary, not claimed to be exhaustive, of the earlier experimental work in psychical research is here given.

Qualitative Experiments.

In 1881–2, a responsible group of investigators carried out tests with members of a family of the name of Creery, and reported that they obtained 95 successes in 497 trials, the probable number of chance-successes being 27.[1]

In 1883–5, Dr. Malcolm Guthrie, J.P., carried out a series of experiments with drawings and reported a fair amount of success.[2]

In 1888–90, Dr. Alfred Backman, of Kalmar, Sweden, reported some remarkable successes with subjects able to describe distant scenes under a kind of hypnosis. A responsible British committee visited him and was favourably impressed by his methods and his subjects.[3]

In 1889–90, Professor and Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, with others, carried out two series of experiments with hypnotised subjects, using numbers and colours. The results were carefully tabulated and were regarded as adding to the evidence for telepathy.[4]

In 1890–95, Mrs. Verrall and her daughter carried out experiments with cards, which indicated a faculty of precognition.[5]

In 1892, Dr. A. Blair Thaw, of New York, conducted a series of telepathic experiments in the presence of a witness, which still further added to the evidence for telepathy.[6]

In 1905, Miss Clarissa Miles and Miss Hermione Ramsden carried out a series of interesting experiments while several miles apart, supervision and help being given by Sir William Barrett. These experiments showed remarkable coincidences.[7]

Very remarkable results have been recorded by a Polish engineer, M. Stefan Ossowiecki of Warsaw. His faculty was tested by the Society for Psychical Research in a careful

[1] *Phantasms of the Living*, abridged edition, p. 16.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 28.

[3] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. vii, p. 199.

[4] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. vi, p. 128.

[5] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xi, pp. 174–95.

[6] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. viii, pp. 422–35.

[7] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xxi, pp 60–93.

experiment in which no flaw or loophole has been discovered. A drawing of an ink-bottle, made on ruled paper with the word SWAN underlined in blue and INK underlined in red, was folded and enclosed an a series of light-tight envelopes, specially sealed and secretly marked. This was handled by M. Ossowiecki in the presence of a committee. He drew the bottle and wrote both words in their positions with red and blue lines beneath them. The only mistake he made was to transpose the red and blue lines. The seals and secret marks had not been tampered with.[1]

In 1910–15, Professor Gilbert Murray carried out a series of experiments with his daughter, Mrs. Arnold Toynbee, in which he, having gone out of the room, came in and guessed the subject which had been decided upon. From a quarter to a third of the tests were completely successful, and the successes were of a detailed kind. Physical contact was maintained between the percipient and his daughter.[2]

In 1928–9, the American author, Upton Sinclair, carried out a series of telepathic experiments with his wife, which he afterwards published under the unfortunate title of *Mental Radio: Does it Work and How?* The book is full of interest, and pages of facsimile drawings are given illustrating the degree of success. Out of 290 drawings, 65 were estimated as successes, 155 as partial successes, and 70 as failures. But where drawings correspond in many details, such figures mean little, they are so far below the truth.

In 1939, an interesting book containing an account of experimental work with discussion by the French experimenter René Warcollier was published in England.[3] It contains a considerable amount of evidence for telepathy.

Quantitative Experiments.

In the above experiments, no mathematical estimate of the chance-factor was possible. That it is a great advantage in many experiments to be able to estimate the chance-factor mathematically has been recognised ever since exact

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xli, p. 345.

[2] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. xxix, pp. 46–110 and Vol. xxxiv, pp. 212–74.

[3] *Experiment in Telepathy*, George Allen and Unwin.

experiments in this subject began. In 1885, Sir Oliver Lodge suggested a method of testing telepathy by card-guessing, and gave a mathematical formula for estimating the degree of success.[1]

In 1917, Professor John E. Coover (Fellow in Psychical Research and Assistant Professor in Psychology at Stanford University, California) published a diffuse book of over 600 pages, giving results of quantitative experiments in telepathy and cognate psychological problems. He regarded his results as being due to chance; but a re-assessment of his figures showed them to be significant.[2]

In 1916–7, Professor L. T. Troland published a brochure of work he had accomplished in the psychological laboratory at Harvard on the same subject. He used an experimental technique designed to discover whether any break in causality occurs in the response-mechanism of the body which might (in his view) account for paranormal phenomena. He says: "However, the attempt to reduce psychic problems to a truly experimental basis absolutely necessitates their restatement in physical terms." This is a curious statement, seeing that the phenomena themselves are psychological.

In 1924, Miss Ina Jephson, a Member of Council of the Society for Psychical Research, conducted a series of experiments with playing-cards. In assessing her results, she was assisted by the well-known statistician, Professor R. A. Fisher. Six thousand trials carried out with 240 subjects gave an average score per guess of 13·03, while the average score per guess given by chance would have been 11·14. There was thus a positive result, and it was noticed that success was greatest at first and then fell off. This feature has since been observed by other experimenters.[3]

The experiments were then carried out on a larger scale with improved technique, the Boston Society for Psychical Research, Columbia University and the University of London taking part; 9,496 guesses were recorded by 567 subjects, but the results were all negative.

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Vol. ii, p. 257.

[2] See p. 238.

[3] *Proceedings*, S.P.R.· Vol. xxxviii, p. 223.

The Department of Psychology in the University of Gröningen in Holland carried out a careful experiment in telepathy. The agent drew a letter out of one bag and a figure out of another, thus indicating by cross-reference a square on a board in another room. The percipient in this latter room pointed on each occasion to a square on the board, and the coincidences were noted. The successes were 60 where chance would have given only 4½.[1]

In 1927, the Society for Psychical Research carried out an experiment in mass-telepathy, notifying the percipients who were listening in, by means of signals broadcast by the B.B.C. Eight agents concentrated their attention on a specially selected object on each occasion, while Sir Oliver Lodge announced the time of each experiment over the microphone. No clear indication of telepathy was revealed by the 24,659 results sent in.[2]

Perhaps it may be mentioned that the author made experiments in 1935–6, mainly with a single subject, in which an electrical device was used for recording the results. Safeguards of all kinds were provided, and a large number of trials showed unmistakable evidence for telepathy.[3]

This list of experimental work is not exhaustive. The work of Usher and Burt and of Estabrooks should also be referred to. Not all the experiments have given evidence of extra-sensory or telepathic faculty; but the majority have done so. It is inconceivable that so many responsible experimenters could have repeatedly obtained positive results if the faculty were purely imaginary.

If any doubt remained, it should be set at rest for any mind which is open to facts by the following more recent series of experiments.

[1] Reported at the *International Congress of Psychical Research*, 1921.

[2] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxxviii, p. 1.

[3] *Journal*, S.P.R., Vol. xx, p. 294 and Vol. xxix, p. 5; also *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xliv. p. 99.

12

THE WORK OF RHINE

An Up-to-Date Laboratory Test of Paranormal Faculty

RESEARCH into extra-sensory perception, by means of the card-guessing technique, has been carried out on a wide scale by Prof. J. B. Rhine, Associate Professor of Psychology at Duke University, North Carolina. This work was encouraged by Professor William McDougall when he occupied the chair of Psychology in that university.

Results were first published by Prof. Rhine in 1934 in a book entitled *Extra-Sensory Perception*, a term which he originated. Since that time, he and his staff have accomplished an immense amount of further work and his experimental technique has spread to other universities. A *Journal of Parapsychology* has been established and other books on the subject have been published. So voluminous has the material become that it is impossible to summarise it adequately in a small compass.

The principle on which these researches were based has been substantially described in Chapter 10. It is quite simple. Packs of Zener cards and the calculus of probabilities provided most of the equipment. The experimental conditions were varied in all kinds of ways to test various features and to meet all kinds of criticism. The results cannot be explained by any theory of leakage of information or by chance. They have been repeated over and over again and the total number of experiments is now immense. The reader who wishes to study these experiments in detail is referred to the books mentioned at the end of this volume.

It may be worth while to deal with one point here, with regard to card-guessing, which may occur to the reader. If the guesser has a habit of favouring one type of card more than another, will this affect the score given by chance? Suppose that, out of the five designs, circle, cross, wavy lines, rectangle, star, the subject keeps on guessing star, will not the hits on star mount up although

only chance is acting? The answer is that, as long as the cards are properly shuffled, so as to be in an entirely random order, it will not. Take the extreme case in which the subject guesses star on every occasion. If the cards are properly shuffled, star will turn up on the average on one-fifth of the occasions, and the subject will on all these occasions guess right. But he will get no successes on the other cards, so that, on the average, one-fifth of his guesses will be right, which is still the chance-expectation.

Dr. Rhine's analysis of his results is now generally accepted by those who have studied it. His work may still be vaguely scoffed at by a few who have not examined it, but, as we shall see later, there is a very interesting reason for this, which has nothing to do with any deficiencies in Rhine's work. In numbers of his experiments the odds against chance run to tens of thousands, even to millions to one, so that, apart from all questions about the exact point of significance, chance as an explanation is utterly out of the question. Various criticisms have been brought against Rhine's work; but all have now been satisfactorily met. Such repeated successes could not possibly have been obtained unless a genuine extra-sensory faculty were at work.

Rhine has not employed "sensitives", or people supposed to be endowed in any special way, as subjects for his experiments, but students and members of the staff of his own university, extended afterwards to outsiders. And in most cases the subject did his or her guessing when in a normal state of consciousness, or something no further removed from it than a slight condition of dreaminess.

The feature noticed by Miss Jephson, that the rate of scoring successes tended to be greatest at the beginning of an experiment and to fall off as it proceeded, was also noticed by Rhine; but Rhine observed also a tendency to pick up again at the end, so that the minimum rate of scoring was in the middle. Such an unexpected feature again supports the genuineness of the phenomenon, for it could not be due to chance. He also made some experiments with drugs and found that caffeine tended to raise the rate of scoring and sodium amytal to lower it.

Rhine's results consist so largely of accumulated detail

amassed as the result of many experiments that it is impossible in a brief summary to discuss them. They baffle attempts at condensation because they are couched in a somewhat dilute and loose style which renders it difficult to arrive at a crisp and clear statement of what has been achieved. The brevity of this chapter must not be taken to indicate any lack of importance in Rhine's work, but is due to the fact that the original accounts must be studied if the significance of the work is to be appreciated.

THE WORK OF CARINGTON

A Repeatable Technique

In this country, Mr. W. Whately Carington has done outstanding work in applying measurement to psychical research.[1] His object was to develop a repeatable technique by means of which any qualified person could test for himself the existence of the extra-sensory faculty, or, if you prefer a narrower term, of telepathy. The specification he laid down was: (1) The conditions must be rigid, (2) The scoring must be unbiased, (3) The results must be statistically significant, (4) The experiment must be repeatable.

These four conditions can be attained by means of card-guessing experiments on the lines of those of Dr. Rhine; but Mr. Carington decided to depart in certain ways from Rhine's technique. In the first place, he did not employ those about him, but just members of the public, as percipients. In the second place, he did not use the five restricted choices which the Zener cards afford, but used instead simple drawings.

His percipients were ordinary people with no claim to "psychic" or sensitive gifts; and they took part in the experiments in their own homes. They were seldom in the same house in which the pictures were drawn or the work of the experimenters carried out. Usually, they were not even in the same town. The choice of pictures instead of cards as material had the advantage of introducing a good deal more human interest into the experiment. Guessing hundreds of cards is apt to become very boring; and it is possible that a state of boredom is not the best condition for telepathy.

By introducing free material, Mr. Carington made the second of his conditions more difficult to attain; but, by

[1] Full accounts of the experiments here described will be found in *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xlvi, pp. 34–151, and pp. 277–344. Also *Proceedings* American S.P.R., Vol. xxiv, pp. 3–106.

the use of an ingenious method he attained it. Most of the experiments here described were carried out in collaboration with a Cambridge committee consisting of Professor C. D. Broad, Professor H. H. Price, and Dr. R. H. Thouless under the terms of the Perrott Studentship in Psychical Research, established at Trinity College by the late Mr. Frank Duerdin Perrott as a memorial to F. W. H. Myers. Both Professor Broad and Dr. Thouless took part in the experiments by acting as receivers and custodians of the record-sheets sent in by the percipients.

The present brief summary gives no idea of the difficulties surmounted by Mr. Whately Carington or of the immense amount of work which the pioneer character of the research entailed in the matter of experimentation. It is sufficient to say that the difficulties were overcome and the results gave clear proof of the operation of telepathy as well as of something more than is usually denoted by that term.

The experiments may be summarised under the following headings:

Selection of Target-Pictures. A picture to be selected as a target for telepathy must be chosen at random. No possibility must be left open that agent and percipient might naturally be thinking about the topic chosen: for example, nothing under discussion in the press must be used. The only safe way is to employ some impersonal mode of selection. Mr. Carington chose his target-pictures as follows. He opened a copy of Chambers' Mathematical Tables at random and noted the last digits of the first three or four entries on the page. This gave him a purely chance number. Then he opened Webster's Dictionary at the page indicated by this number and selected the first drawable item on the page. Abstract words were rejected. All that the percipients knew about the target-pictures was that they would represent things which could be drawn on paper. Having thus selected an object, Mr. Carington, or his wife, made a drawing of it and this was pinned to a book-case in his study from 7 p.m. to 9.30 a.m. the next morning. During any part of this time, percipients, in their own homes, made sketches (amplified if necessary by written descriptions) of what drifted into their minds as being the target-picture.

Precautions. The door of Mr. Carington's study was fitted with a Yale lock and was locked all the time the picture was exposed. The room was on the first floor, and the curtains, though tested and found to be opaque, were nevertheless reinforced by others made of rep. There were no houses immediately opposite, and it would have been quite impossible for anyone to see the picture while it was pinned up. At 9.30 in the morning the experiment was considered to be over: the drawing was removed and at once locked away in a steel box. These precautions, and the fact that the percipients were not in the house or even near it, made leakage of information impossible.

The Percipients' Part. Each percipient was provided with a book of printed forms and asked to draw in the space provided whatever came into his or her mind during the period of the experiment. Date, time and signature were filled in. As a stimulus to interest, a photograph of the study (minus, of course, any picture) accompanied the forms. Mr. Carington thought afterwards that this photograph of the surroundings played an important psychological part in the telepathic process.

Method of Judging and Assessing the Results. A complete experiment consisted in the repetition of the above procedure with a fresh drawing for each of ten consecutive nights. Each percipient, therefore, sent in ten forms containing his ten "shots" at these ten targets. The problem before Mr. Carington was: (*a*) to decide how many of these shots had hit their respective targets, and (*b*) whether more hits had been scored than chance would account for. When dealing with restricted material, such as Zener cards, this problem is not difficult; but when free material such as pictures is used, it is not so easy. Mr. Carington, as every pioneer in experiment must, perfected his technique in the light of experience. I shall here describe briefly that which he finally adopted, though I shall not be able to go into all its refinements.

Each percipient's drawing was marked with a code-number by reference to which it could be identified after the sheets had been shuffled. By means of this code-number it could be known at which target-picture it had been aimed. The drawings from each of the percipients were then mixed

up and presented to an independent judge, who had also the ten original target-pictures (shuffled) before him. The function of the judge was to examine each of the percipients' drawings and decide whether it resembled one of the ten targets or not. If he thought that it did so, he assigned it as a "hit"; if he thought it resembled no target-picture, he counted it as a "miss." He had no knowledge of which pictures had been aimed at which targets, and was guided by observed resemblances only.

The difficulty which now had to be surmounted was that the number of hits assigned by the judge would clearly depend on his own idiosyncrasy. He might accord a hit for a slight resemblance only, in which case there would be a great many hits; or he might only accord a hit if the picture were extremely like the target, in which case there would be very few hits. If the result was to be impersonal and objective, this idiosyncrasy had to be got rid of. The method adopted depended on a *differential* characteristic of the results. Let us suppose that the judge, having before him the ten target-pictures in a shuffled order, and also all the percipients' drawings, has decided that there have been 1,000 hits in all on one or another of the target-pictures. The rest of the pictures are unlike any target and are just misses. We disregard the misses altogether and consider only the hits. There are 1,000 of them. On one occasion, we will suppose, the target-picture drawn was a Boat; and 25 of the total 1,000 hits were hits on Boat. Of course these 25 hits on Boat were drawn on different occasions all through the experiment and most of them were chance hits. If we consider them all to have been chance hits we shall not go very far wrong; so that we can say that, *if chance were acting alone*, there would be an expectation of 25 hits out of 1,000 on any particular target, such as Boat. But, if only chance were acting, this same proportion of hits, namely 25 per 1,000, would occur in any sub-division of the experiment as well as in the whole. So that, if chance alone were acting, when Boat was the target, we should expect to get 25 in 1,000, that is to say 1 in 40 or 2·5 per cent hits on Boat in that section of the experiment. Now we have only to find out what proportion of hits occurred on Boat when Boat was the target and to compare these

with the chance-expected 2·5 per cent. We can see if these hits on Boat are significantly more or less than 2·5 per cent. If they are, some other cause than chance must have been at work. We can find out whether they are significant by applying the calculus of probabilities.

The principle, therefore, amounts to this. When we are dealing with cards, which offer restricted choices, we know *beforehand* what is the probability of chance-success. But in the case of free choices, such as are offered by pictures, we do not know this beforehand. We therefore make the material itself tell us by the method just described.

What about the idiosyncrasy of the judge? That clearly evens out. When the judge assigns twenty-five pictures as hits on Boat, he does not know which of them were aimed at Boat (i.e. drawn when Boat was the target) and which were chance hits on Boat, drawn on other occasions. His leniency or severity in allowing resemblances will therefore apply equally to the hits when Boat was the target and to the hits made when Boat was not the target. He will favour or disallow resemblances to both classes in the same proportion, since he has no way of telling which is which. His idiosyncrasy, therefore, whatever it may be, and even if it is variable, cancels out. It is only the *proportion* of hits in the two classes, and not the total number of hits which counts.

The method, which can thus be used to compare one section of a total experiment with the experiment as a whole, can also be used to compare one total experiment with a complete series of experiments.

While the vagaries of the judge, even if inconstant, cannot import a super-chance result into the experiment if it is not there, they can to some extent alter the sensitivity of the experiment. By going to absurd extremes in either direction, he could to some extent obscure the evidence for telepathy; but he could under no circumstances create evidence which was not there.

The net result of Mr. Carington's experiments shows that a telepathic or extra-sensory faculty is very clearly at work. The whole batch of percipients, taken together, manifests the faculty in a slight degree, some individuals possessing it in a more marked degree than others. To make assurance

doubly sure, Mr. Carington carried out a control-experiment. Fifty fresh drawings were made and ten of them selected at random to represent targets. The other forty were regarded as representing the percipients' shots at the targets. Naturally no sign of anything but chance appeared in the mathematical results: but a control experiment is always worth doing. It shows in clear relief the difference between the condition in which we *know* that only chance is acting and the condition in which we suspect that something is there besides chance.

It would occupy too much space to give tables of results here. The reader can find them in the sources to which references have been given. Mr. Carington has published seven main experiments in which a total of 741 percipients took part. Six of these were conducted from Cambridge, and the seventh, in which five other experimenters took part, were from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Oxford, Bristol and Reading. There was also an eighth, which subsumed the results of 29 smaller experiments, and was carried out by 25 different experimenters working under Mr. Carrington's directions. This involved about 430 percipients.

His results, taken together, show that a weak faculty of telepathy (or rather of extra-sensory perception) is widely, perhaps universally, distributed among the population, and that this fact can be verified by any competent investigator who takes the trouble to do so. This meets the demand often put forward by scientists for a repeatable experiment in this field. Perhaps it is not quite safe to say that every experiment on these lines will yield positive results; but anyone who perseveres sufficiently will get positive evidence in time.

Besides yielding evidence for telepathy, these results had a surprise in store. Looking through them, Mr. Carington was struck by the frequent correspondences between drawings made by percipients and the target-picture which was not exposed at the time, but which *had been exposed the time before or was to be exposed the time after*. Calculation proved that this was happening: percipients were scoring above chance both on the target-card of last time and on the target-card of the time to come. Scoring above chance on last time's target might only mean that the

telepathic impulse was slow in revealing itself; but scoring on the next target ahead meant that the percipient had knowledge of a drawing which not only had not yet been made, but the subject of which had *not yet been decided upon* by the number-and-dictionary method. Thus the experiments give clear evidence of precognition, and show again the faculty demonstrated in an ampler way by the evidence in Chapter 8.

We will now turn to another remarkable and completely rigid piece of experimental evidence.

14

THE WORK OF SOAL

A Rigid Proof of Telepathy – and More

DR. S. G. SOAL, a mathematician of London University, and an experienced investigator in psychical research has carried out one of the most thorough and painstaking pieces of work ever accomplished in the experimental branch of this subject. He wished to repeat in this country the experiments which Prof. Rhine had carried out so successfully in America. Accordingly he copied his technique, but introduced even stricter conditions. He worked in the presence of an independent witness and was more than careful—one may say he was meticulous to the last degree—to eliminate every conceivable sensory clue which could be imagined to pass from agent to percipient.

Writing in 1938, Dr. Soal said: "Personally, I have never exposed a naked card to a subject in the course of over 100,000 trials." It is well known, of course, that if the percipient can see the backs of the cards, faint marks or irregularities of the edges or back-pattern may convey some clue if the cards have been used several times. Even if not noticed consciously, such small indications may subconsciously influence the percipient. By the autumn of 1939, Dr. Soal had worked for five years, had tested 160 different subjects, and had recorded 128,350 guesses, all without success. The calculus of probabilities, applied to his results, showed nothing more than chance could account for; and Dr. Soal was beginning to think that there must be some undiscovered flaw in Rhine's methods. Why should a method which produced results in America fail to produce any in Britain? Then, by a happy inspiration, Mr. Carington pronounced to Dr. Soal the magic word "displacement"! What he meant was that he had discovered in his own experiments that his percipients did not always score on the target put up for them at the time, but sometimes scored on the target next before or next after it.

This had not entered into Dr. Soal's calculations. He had assumed that, if a percipient scored at all, he would score on the card which the agent was looking at at that particular moment. He now went through all his results again to find out whether his subjects had been scoring above chance on the card one behind or on the card one ahead. He found that two of them had been scoring quite definitely above chance in both directions. The other 158 subjects had only obtained chance scores on all cards.

Dr. Soal now abstracted these two promising percipients and started a new series of experiments, using one of them only, because the other became unavailable on account of the war. These experiments he pursued, with the assistance of Mrs. K. M. Goldney, during 1941–3.

Conditions of the Experiments. The experiments were carried out in two rooms, a larger and a smaller, opening out of one another. In the larger room sat the agent at a small table well out in the middle of the room, together with his controlling experimenter, Mrs. Goldney. The witness sat or stood near the agent. In the smaller room sat the percipient at another table, together with the percipient's experimenter, Dr. Soal. The intervening door was left slightly ajar to enable the "ready" signals to be heard; but the tables in the two rooms were so placed that, even had the door been wide open, one table could not have been seen from the other on account of the intervening wall. Across the middle of the agent's table was a wooden screen, 31 by 26 inches, with a 3-inch square hole in the centre. On the *far* side of this screen, completely hidden therefore even from the wall of the smaller room, sat the agent. On the near side of the screen, with back to the smaller room, sat the agent's experimenter. Still another precaution was taken. The cards in front of the agent were placed in a box having only the side towards the agent open. Therefore, even without the screen and the wall and the distance, the cards would have been invisible to the percipient. Dr. Soal points out that this box also meets the possible criticism that someone might have made a hole in the roof and looked down from it unperceived, making signals to the percipient! Absurd though this criticism is, it is scarcely more absurd than

some of the suggestions which critics put forward with regard to evidence for the paranormal.

In these experiments, the pack of Zener cards was abandoned and five single cards only were used, each bearing the coloured picture of an animal—a Lion, an Elephant, a Zebra, a Giraffe and a Pelican. These five cards were shuffled before each experiment of 50 trials, and were laid in a row face downwards in the box in front of the agent. The outer door of the room was kept locked during the experiments. Each experiment was recorded on a separate, printed scoring sheet. Each sheet used at the agent's table contained 50 randomised numbers (1 to 5 inclusive) prepared by Dr. Soal beforehand, either from logarithmic tables, or from published tables of random numbers. Care was taken that no one but Dr. Soal should see this sheet until it was handed to the agent's experimenter. The latter, seated at the opposite side of the table, separated from the agent by the screen, had five cards in front of her bearing the numbers 1 to 5. Looking at the sheet of random numbers, she held up to the hole in the screen the card bearing the number next on the list. The agent, seeing this number through the hole in the screen, picked up and looked at the corresponding card in the row of five face downwards in front of him. He then replaced the card, again face downwards in the row. No one was allowed to speak during the experiments except the agent's experimenter who called out the trials. No clue could possibly have been given by this because the agent's experimenter did not know which card the agent was looking at. She was never allowed to shuffle these cards, and was ignorant of their order.

The percipient in the other room recorded his choice each time he heard the call, by writing down on a blank score-sheet the initial letter of the animal he selected. After the experiment was over, the cards in front of the agent were turned up and it was then known which animal corresponded to which number. All that then had to be done was to fill in the numbers opposite the initial animal-letters on the percipient's score-sheet and compare these with the list of random numbers which had been used by the agent's experimenter. Numbers which corresponded in

the parallel columns gave the successes. The calculus of probabilities, applied to these results, showed whether the successes were significantly above chance or not. The score-sheets were immediately removed at the end of each experiment, counted and checked independently by witness and experimenter, signed and copied in duplicate, and the duplicates were posted to a chosen custodian. Thus there was no opportunity for tampering with the score-sheets after the experiment.

The conditions under which these experiments were carried out were probably as impeccable as any which could have been devised. No sensory hints could *possibly* have passed undetected from agent to percipient. The results obtained are therefore of the greatest interest and importance. The most extraordinary feature of these experiments is that *by far the highest scores were obtained on the card which the agent was going to look at on the next occasion ahead.* The hits on the card one ahead were so many that in the course of 3,789 trials the probability of their being due to chance was $10^{-35} \times 5$, or one in over a billion, billion, billion! Chance is wildly out of the question. We are again faced with evidence for precognition. The reader is referred for details to the original report.[1]

What conclusion is to be drawn? Information cannot have reached the percipient by any normal means. Chance is definitely ruled out. Is the critic going to turn his back and say that he wants more evidence? And, when he gets it is he going to do the same thing again, and so *ad infinitum*, thus showing that *a priori* considerations, and not facts, are what principally influence his judgement?

But is it necessary to adopt the hypothesis of precognition? Can we escape from it by adopting a roundabout theory of telepathy? It seems that with sufficient ingenuity we might, although the alternative is not very plausible. The agent's experimenter has the sheet of random numbers before her, and it is hidden from the agent by the screen. Suppose she transmits to the agent telepathically and unconsciously the number of the trial next ahead: this would

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xlvi, pp. 152–98; and Vol. xlvii, pp. 21–150.

be no help to the agent at first; but after the experiment has proceeded so far that he had turned up and seen all the five cards, he might subconsciously associate the right card with the telepathically received number, and send it on telepathically to the percipient just in time for him to record it one trial ahead. Thus, by double telepathy and subconscious association we could get rid of the hypothesis of precognition. Successes of the target one ahead should, on this view, be few at first and mount up as the experiment proceeded. Examination does not show this to be the case, so that this roundabout hypothesis receives no support.

A variant of the experiment was then tried, and this tells still more against the double telepathic theory. Dr. Soal wanted to introduce an element of human choice into the apparently precognitive phenomenon. Therefore, instead of the card of randomised numbers, he gave the agent's experimenter a bag of counters. There were 200 counters in the bag, of five different colours, 40 of each colour. These were shaken up and the agent's experimenter, without looking, took a counter from the bag and held it up to the hole in the screen. The agent then selected the card, which had a similarly coloured counter lying at its head. Sometimes a bowl was used for the counters instead of a bag. The report says that the agent's experimenter stood up and looked over the top of the screen while selecting the counter, so as not to see what she was doing. It is hard to suppose that, in some subconscious way, she knew which counter she was going to select next time. The evidence for precognition in these experiments is therefore very strong: the evidence for telepathy irrefutable.

Dr. Soal made further interesting and important discoveries. One was a "sandwich" effect. He discovered that if the target-card happened to be preceded and followed by a card of the same kind, success was reinforced. The Zener pack, used in his earlier experiments, contained cards bearing the five different diagrams, Cross, Circle, Wavy Lines, Rectangle and Star. Suppose that the target-card was a circle and that the cards before and after it were both crosses, it was found that this increased the likelihood of a

success being scored on the circle. The "sandwich" condition might, of course, also take the form of all three cards being circles, etc.

Another series of experiments was carried out to discriminate between telepathy and clairvoyance. By "clairvoyance" is here meant direct paranormal perception of a material object, such as a card, as distinct from paranormal perception of an idea, or mental image, of a card in someone's mind. Exactly the same procedure was used as that described above, except that the agent did not turn up the card and look at it, but merely touched its back. Thus the agent did not know what animal was on the face of the card he touched, for the cards were shuffled before the experiment and were not turned up during the course of it. The experiment was a total failure. Out of 480 trials there were only 98 hits, which are just what chance would be expected to give. Before a test for clairvoyance, the agent's experimenter shuffled the cards, but was careful to keep her eyes shut. The percipient was not told which were the experiments for clairvoyance, so that suggestion could not have anything to do with the result. The clairvoyant experiments were, in fact, interspersed at random among the telepathic experiments; nevertheless they failed while the telepathic experiments succeeded.[1]

One other important fact was observed. The average time taken by a trial was measured by the use of a stop-clock; and this, with normal procedure, amounted to 2·60 seconds. It was when working at this rate that the bulk of the successes were scored on the trial next ahead. Dr. Soal now increased the rate of working to about double the speed, so that a trial only took 1·38 seconds, and the trial occurring after an interval of 2·76 seconds was now *two* ahead. It was then found that the bulk of the successes shifted to the trial *two* ahead; that is to say that the time of optimum scoring still remained about $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{3}{4}$ seconds ahead of the present moment. This is an interesting result; but we must not jump hastily to the conclusion that this particular time-interval has some peculiar significance in

[1] Other experimenters have claimed success under these conditions.

the structure of time. It may be no more than a subconscious habit of the particular sensitive employed.

Most of the above results were obtained with one agent; though twelve persons were tried as agents. Only three gave results of at all a brilliant character. Thus it would seem that the particular agent is important as well as the particular percipient. Perhaps what is needed is the right combination.

15

THE WORK OF HETTINGER

The Effect of an Object in Reinforcing Telepathy

BETWEEN 1935 and 1937, Dr. J. Hettinger carried out a series of experiments of a somewhat different kind, the results of which he published in two books entitled *The Ultra-Perceptive Faculty* and *Exploring the Ultra-Perceptive Faculty* (Rider). The first of these was approved by the London University as a thesis for the award of the Ph.D. Degree.

Dr. Hettinger made use of the phenomenon called "psychometry"[1] (further instances of which will be cited in Chapters 20 and 21) in a somewhat novel manner.

In the first series of experiments, an object belonging to some person was submitted to the sensitive employed, who wrote down her impressions about it. Objects belonging to 63 different persons were used in the preliminary trials, and the sensitive made 1,266 statements about them. Of these, 605 were found to be correct. The difficult task of making a statistical estimate of success was undertaken. It is very difficult to apply statistics to the qualitative remarks of sensitives without being more deluded than assisted by the results. The sensitive holds an object belonging to Mr. X. and says what she feels about him, and her statements have to be classified as right or wrong. When the sensitive says: "In lots of ways this person is an idealist," or "Waiting for something important in March", it is not easy to classify the statement as either right or wrong. Where, exactly, does idealism begin? At what point does an event begin to be important?

Dr. Hettinger's method of assessment passed through various stages, and he finally adopted the following. Twelve items of statement, which the sensitive had given while "psychometrising" an object belonging to X., were

[1] See p. 55.

mixed together with twelve items of statement, which the sensitive had given on a different occasion with reference to someone else, the latter twelve being drawn at random from a box. The whole 24 were then submitted to X., who selected the 12 items which he considered applied to himself. Suppose that *R* out of these 12 were actually intended by the sensitive to apply to X., and *W* out of these 12 were not; then if *R* is greater than *W*, the sensitive has scored more successes than failures; and if *W* is greater than *R*, the sensitive has scored more failures than successes. By obtaining a sufficiently large number of records, the ratio of experiments in which *R* is greater than *W* to the experiments in which *R* is less than *W* provides the basis for a statistical calculation as to the ability of chance to account for the result as a whole.

In the net result, using two sensitives, Dr. Hettinger claims to have obtained statistically significant figures. Among his conclusions were the following: "Neither the nature of the object 'psychometrised' nor the sentimental or emotional association therewith, if any, is the determining factor of the 'sensitive's' response." "The actual handling of the articles by the sensitive is not absolutely necessary for the exercise of the faculty." "Many of the items concern experiences by the owner after he has parted from the article." It will be noticed that these conclusions are in agreement with those of Dr. Osty.[1]

The second series of experiments was conducted on different lines. The person acting as agent (or who would be the agent if the experiment were purely telepathic) was asked to read an illustrated magazine in a natural manner, noting down the exact time at which he read a particular page or looked at a particular picture. In another house, some miles distant, sat the sensitive, who concentrated on an object enclosed in an envelope, belonging to the agent. The sensitive was not told about the agent's looking at the magazine; she merely psychometrised the object in the envelope, as if that were the sole experiment. Her remarks were taken down by the experimenter beside her, who also

[1] See pp. 176–7.

noted the times. The sensitive's remarks were afterwards compared with the pictures or letter-press which the agent had been examining at the time. Very remarkable correspondences were found. For example, when the agent was looking at a familiar advertisement-poster of a girl balanced on one toe, with right leg raised, arms extended and head thrown back, entitled "Fitness wins!", the sensitive said: "In touch with someone who can *twist the body* anyhow." A picture of a patient in a hospital with arms and head entirely swathed in bandages produced: "A *coiled rope*, heavily *twisted round*. . . . Someone with *arm bandaged up*; an *accident*." There were some curious cases of illusion. A photograph of Notre Dame, reflected in the wet pavement, produced the remark: "Something about *wax and wax candles*." If the picture was turned upside down, the distorted reflection of the vertical architecture looked extraordinarily like guttering candles. Also *wax* candles suggest a church. There were many such coincidences.

Dr. Hettinger did not consider that any statistical estimate was needed in this series of experiments to decide whether the correspondences were due to chance. Opinions will probably differ on this point. In any case, the series of results needs to be studied in the original. On the face of it the correspondences are very remarkable.

The experimental side of psychical research has now reached the point at which it can be said that telepathy and precognition have been revealed under the strictest conditions that science can demand. Possibly the two faculties are, in reality, one. In any case they co-exist. Critics sometimes complain that good evidence for them is small in quantity. Compared with the masses of information available in other branches of science, this is no doubt true: but the reason for it is perfectly simple. It is because very few people will consent to work in the paranormal field. This is still regarded as a region of "superstition and spooks," to be treated with levity—a region which no one who values his reputation will confess to taking seriously. So long as this continues to be the case, the quantity of reliable evidence cannot be expected to be large. Considering the mere handful of people who work in this field, the results obtained have been remarkable.

The rigidly sound evidence forms only a tiny fraction of the phenomena which are going on all the time around us. Unless the strictest care has been taken over a case, it is always possible to suggest some alternative explanation. Undoubtedly spiritualists produce countless examples of paranormal phenomena; but, because they do not, as a rule, take the precautions necessary to stop all loopholes, most of the evidence they collect is wasted from the point of view of bringing about general conviction. Also, there are sensitives possessing remarkable gifts who refuse to use them for the furtherance of this conviction, an attitude which seems unfortunate and selfish considering the dire need for irrefutable evidence at the present time. The promise of light on the true nature of the human individual and of the wider nature of the universe would be of the rosiest if people would consent to work in the paranormal field and would substitute scientific impartiality for their present prejudices.

In the present state of these prejudices, the narrowly experimental side of psychical research will appeal more to the scientific mind than will the more observational side. But we must not let this fact distort our view of the whole. Breadth of outlook in this subject is of the utmost importance. Here, if anywhere, we need the bird's-eye and not the worm's-eye view. Experiments in card-guessing and the like touch only the fringe of the subject. The guessers are in a state of consciousness not far removed from the normal and, as a rule, nothing more than faint impressions or impulses come through to consciousness. Paranormal processes take place in the depths of the personality, and as we saw when dealing with spontaneous telepathy, *signals* are created to acquaint consciousness with what is going on in these depths. The signals appear to get through best when consciousness is partially displaced from its normal position of control. While consciousness remains in full control, these signals do not get through to any considerable extent. Indeed, the human personality is so constructed as to keep them out. Unless they were rigidly censored, they would interfere with adaptation to life. Only on rare occasions do these signals come through with sufficient power to break into the normal, waking

consciousness. This occurs in some of the very interesting cases of "crisis-apparitions."[1]

By sitting quietly in the dark and waiting for impressions, these signals can sometimes be detected in the form of faint, vague and wandering images; and these form, for the most part, the subject-matter of experimental telepathy. The successful results obtained in such experiments depend on the sensitiveness of the technique, despite the poor quality of the material, although a good subject, as in Dr. Soal's experiments, can bring the quality up.

If the principle be accepted that, in these phenomena, consciousness receives signals from the depths below, the main problem before psychical research is to provide the best conditions for getting these signals to occur. This resolves itself into the discovery of the best method for displacing the consciousness of the subject or sensitive so that the clearest type of signal can get through. It is a *psychological* problem; not a problem of statistics. Given that we have found out how to create the right psychological condition in the subject (who should have been specially selected) so that a reasonably free flow of "signal-material" reaches consciousness, we no longer need to deal with the statistics of coincidence; and we need no longer appeal to the general crowd for our human material. Obviously, it is better to deal with a specially suitable human sample rather than to try to cope with a host of unsuitable ones: just as it is more profitable, if you want gold, to search for a gold-mine than to try to extract gold from sea-water. The important matter contained in Chapters 17 and 18 illustrates this. Here, the control of the phenomena was largely outside the investigators' hands. The phenomena controlled *themselves*; and the study of how they did it was the most important part of the investigation. It would have been the height of folly if the investigators had tried to eliminate this feature in order to control the whole thing themselves. It would have shown crass lack of imagination and a slavish adherence to scientific tradition in the face of a novel demand made by a new situation.

Important, then, as the statistical type of experiment is

[1] See *Apparitions*, referred to on p. 67 above.

at the present stage of paranormal inquiry (partly on account of the prejudices of the average critic, but partly also because it really does provide a good method of exploring the fringe of the subject) we must not lose sight of its limitations and of its unsuitability to the subject as a whole; nor of the fact that psychological and not mathematical methods must form the main instrument for advance. In statistical experiments, the events presented for study are necessarily of very restricted kind. If they were not, they would not be amenable to statistical treatment. But in order to acquire information about paranormal processes, we need events which are rich in qualitative detail, and these are just the kind of events with which statistics cannot deal.

VI

ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE THRESHOLD

16

PATIENCE WORTH

An Outstanding Product of Automatic Writing

It seems that, if a signal is to be sent from the subliminal self to consciousness, it is probably easier for it to utilise the motor rather than the sensory machinery of the organism. One such motor form of signalling is provided by automatic writing. It is extraordinary how much subliminal activity this simple device can reveal. To obtain automatic writing, the subject holds a pencil lightly on a piece of paper, withdraws conscious control from the hand, and awaits results. A planchette or a ouija board may be used instead of a pencil: it is a clumsier device, but has the advantage that two or more persons can operate it at once. Nothing may happen: or the pencil may make meaningless scrawls and scribbles: or it may begin to write intelligible words. Even then the writing may not contain anything very interesting. Sometimes it appears to act as a vent for psychologically repressed material. Occasionally, however, the writing is of a striking character and may even exceed in quality anything that the conscious mind is capable of. The writing then deserves to be called inspirational.

On p. 36 above, it was suggested that genius consists of genuine inspiration, clothed in a superlative form of expression. I now suggest that the best cases of automatic writing consist of inspiration without the superlative expression; for the part played by the conscious mind is lacking. It is impossible to give examples here of the various products of automatic writing; but two cases of

outstanding interest will be quoted. Both contain inspirational material—that is material which the consciousness of the automatist could not have provided.

In the first case, the writing was produced by an American lady, Mrs. John H. Curran of St. Louis, Missouri. Besides attracting considerable attention in America at the time, the case was closely observed throughout by a skilled and competent observer, Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, well known for his work as Research Officer of the Boston Society for Psychic Research. He wrote an exhaustive volume on it entitled *The Case of Patience Worth*, which was published by the above-named society in 1927.

Mrs. Curran was born of British parents at Mound City, Illinois, in 1883; and, though a normally intelligent girl, she received only a desultory education and left school at the age of fourteen. At the age of thirty-one, she had never left the Middle Western States and had never seen the sea. As an example of her somewhat limited general knowledge, the fact is recorded that she was under the impression that Henry VIII had had his head cut off! She was, therefore, not a specialist in history. She was uninterested in spiritualism, her desire being to become a singer: but one day a friend persuaded her to place her fingers on a ouija board. The communications produced by the board were dull, and Mrs. Curran was bored. Then, quite suddenly, on the 8th July, 1913, communications appeared from a personality calling herself "Patience Worth." These communications were couched in an "archaic and very distinctive and pungent English style, utterly different from the colloquial American of the Middle West." Patience was a strongly marked character with a caustic tongue and an emphatic will of her own and bore no discernible resemblance to Mrs. Curran. In answer to questions, she admitted (she did not seem to be interested in talking about herself) that she had, either in 1649 or 1694, lived on a Dorsetshire farm in England, had crossed to America and had there been murdered by Indians. She proceeded to give, through the ouija board (later supplemented by spoken words) an enormous literary output, largely consisting of fiction, estimated at something like three million words. It included *The Sorry Tale*, a

novel of the time of Christ; *Telka*, a tale of the Middle Ages; *Hope Trueblood*, a nineteenth-century story; *The Pot upon the Wheel*, and a large amount of poetry (mostly blank verse), impromptu proverbs, prayers, short compositions and conversation. An interesting feature of these works is that they were produced in markedly different types of dialect, but with a tendency towards the archaic. Here are samples of three of them.

From *The Sorry Tale*. "And his beard hung low upon his breast, and he spake unto the Rome's men: 'The peace of Jehovah be upon you!' And they spat upon his fruits and made loud words, saying: 'Behold, Jerusalem hath been beset of locusts and desert fleas! And Jerusalem's men fill upon this!' And they laughed and went them unto the Temple's steps and stood upon their wet and cried out of the king born of asses and cast stones up unto the Temple's doors. And behold from without the market's spaces swept Jews, and beneath beards gleamed steels, and blades cut the air. And the Rome's men bared their blades and the airs rocked with cries of mock prayers from Rome's lips."

From *Telka*. "'T'were the God that tireth o' good 'pon earth and fashioneth out a man.'

Friar: 'Aye maid, and fearing lest the good be not 'nuff, put more and a-fashioned maid.'

Telka: 'Aye, and the devil did laugh, for 'twere the save o' him for fashioning o' hell. Care, Friar, lest ye scorch.'"

From *Hope Trueblood*. "'Why does your worthless mother leave you free in night's hour to visit Christian homes? Your feet are upon the ground. Where are your better shoes?'

'I haven't none, thanks. She has promised them at Maying.'"

This seemed to send Miss Patricia into a storm, for she rocked and shrieked and beat her bosom, crying out that the tongues of the village were lashes and that no Christian might dwell among them, stopping only to shout: 'Take her away! Take her away!'"

Each style is maintained consistently throughout its own romance, the archaic dialect in the medieval tale *Telka* being admittedly artificial. While it smacked of old

English, it was not an English dialect that has ever been spoken. Patience herself said of it: "Yea, yet look ye into the words o' me. Ye shall find whits o' this and that ta'en from here and there—yet foundationed upon the salt which flavours it o' my ain land." This seems to describe exactly what it was.

Mr. Caspar S. Yost. editor of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, in a book entitled, *Patience Worth: a Psychic Mystery*, undertook an analysis of the language in *Telka.* He found that about 90 per cent of the words are Anglo-Saxon, 10 per cent Old French, with an occasional Scandinavian word, and rarely one of direct Celtic or Latin origin. No word, he says, is used which came into use later than the middle of the seventeenth century. The basis, or "flavour" is seventeenth-century English; but one must go back to the time of Wyclif to get this preponderance of Anglo-Saxon words. It is certain that the language of *Telka* was never a spoken dialect. The feat of writing different stories in these different dialects without ever confusing them is no mean one.

From the subjective point of view, it is interesting to note that, so alien is this forceful and sharp-tongued Patience Worth from Mrs. Curran, that the latter has actually been educated by her. "Six years ago," says Mrs. Curran, "I could not have understood the literature of Patience Worth had it been shown to me." It would not have interested her. "The sensation of the presence of Patience Worth is," she says, "one of the most beautiful that it can be the privilege of the human being to experience." Through it she said that she had been "educated to a deeper spiritual understanding and appreciation than I might have acquired by any study I can conceive of." One seems to catch here a faint reflection of mystical experience on a much lower plane. As the writing developed, illustrative pictorial visions accompanied the script. "When the stories come, the scenes become panoramic with the characters moving and acting their parts, even speaking in converse. The picture is not confined to the point narrated, but takes in everything else within the circle of vision at the time. For instance, if two people are seen talking on the corner of the street, I see, not only them, but the neighbouring part

of the street, with the buildings, stones, dogs, people and all, just as they would be in a real scene. (Or are these scenes actual reproductions?) If the people talk a foreign language, as in *The Sorry Tale*, I hear the talk, but over and above is the voice of Patience either interpreting or giving me the part she wishes to use as story."[1] "When I became curious to ascertain, for instance, what sort of a fruit a market-man was selling, or the smell of some flower, or the feel of some texture which was foreign to my experience, this tiny figure of myself would boldly take part in the play, quite naturally perhaps, walking to the bin-side of a market-man and taking up the fruit and tasting it, or smelling the flower within a garden, or feeling the cloth, or in any natural way attending to the problem in hand. And the experience was immediately my property, as though it had been an actual experience; for it was as real to me as any personal experience, becoming physically mine, recorded by my sight, taste and smell as other experiences. Thus I have become familiar with many flowers of strange places which I never saw, but know when I see them again in pictures. I have shuddered at obnoxious odours, or have been quite exalted by the beauty of some object, or filled with joy at beholding some flower which I had never seen before. It is like travelling in new and unknown regions. . . ."[2]

The major problems presented by Mrs. Curran's automatism are these. (1) Where did the knowledge shown in the writings come from? (2) Was the literary skill manifested beyond the competence of the normal Mrs. Curran? (3) Who, or what, was Patience Worth?

(1) Dealing with the question of knowledge, we have in *The Sorry Tale* a story with a historical background, which is avowedly fiction. Since it is fiction, the question of historical accuracy does not strictly arise; but the story shows a great amount of knowledge of the circumstances of the period, while the local colour and details of the setting, besides being extremely vivid, seem to be extraordinarily true to fact. It is all drawn with a sure touch, and was

[1] *The Case of Patience Worth*, p. 394–5.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 394–5.

produced at high speed without any hesitancy. The story "is built upon a striking conception which makes one of the thieves on the cross a son of the Emperor Tiberius by a Greek slave-girl. Cast aside by Rome, she bears her son near Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth—a spirit of hate representing the sins of ancient humanity, which Christ, the spirit of love, is to expiate, and, in the end, to drive from the world. By means of this conception, Rome, the incarnation of wrong, is made a living actor in the Christ-story. The chapter describing the crucifixion—a chapter of 5,000 words which Mr. Yost says was dictated in a single evening, is a composition of appalling force and vividness, and interpretation upon a high and sincere plane. I, for one, own myself converted by this story from a mood of languid curiosity about an odd 'psychic' phenomenon to a state of lively interest in the future published work of the powerful writer who, whether in or out of the flesh, goes by the name and speaks with the voice of 'Patience Worth.'"[1]

With regard to the knowledge shown in *The Sorry Tale* (published by Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1917), Mr. Caspar Yost, who analysed these writings, wrote as follows: "As to Rome, it presents the characters of Augustus and Tiberius with fidelity, though it makes that of Tiberius accord with the records of Tacitus and Suetonius rather than with the views of modern historians. It shows an understanding of the relations between Augustus and Tiberius, domestic as well as political. Knowledge of the broad sweep of the Roman Empire and the extent of its commerce, the social relations and customs of Rome, the slavery system, the luxury of the Imperial Court, garb and weapons of the soldiers, the contests of the arena, games and many other details of Roman government and life, is indicated in the allusions of the story. . . . An acquaintance with the political relations of Rome to the Jews and with the form of Roman government in Palestine is shown. The situation of the Herodian dynasty is evidently understood and the time and the circumstances known. The character of Herod is revealed in a few lines that indicate

[1] *Ibid*, p. 67.

information derived from Josephus or some unknown source. The situation of the Jews under the Roman Procurators, the contempt of the Romans for the religious exclusiveness of the Jews and of the Roman soldiers for the Jewish people, the hatred of the Jews for the Romans, breaking out occasionally in sedition, the life of the Jews in the home, in the market, in the villages and fields, their religious observances and regulations, and the relation of the Temple to their faith, their Messianic hopes, their sectarian divisions, their costumes and customs, the geography and topography of Palestine, the topography in particular of Jerusalem, the architecture of the Holy City, its walls, its palaces, its market-places, its pools, all of these and more seem to be intimately familiar to the writer of this story."[1] Similarly, in *Telka*, knowledge is shown of medieval England.

It has been suggested that Mrs. Curran secretly crammed all this knowledge in libraries, or overheard experts talking about the historical periods. But her life from childhood is known, and there is no plausibility in these suggestions. Besides, it is extremely difficult for even the best novelists to write accurately about countries with which they are not familiar. General Lew Wallace said in his biography that it took him seven years to write *Ben Hur* and that "research and investigation consumed most of the appropriated time." It seems utterly unplausible to suppose that the knowledge shown in these automatic productions was ever acquired by the normal consciousness of Mrs. Curran.

There is, then, the question of dialect. Mrs. Curran knew and spoke only colloquial American. Whence did she acquire these dialects with their old English basis? Critics suggested that she had picked them up from the Bible, from a glossary of Shakespeare, or from visiting the Ozarks, a region of the United States where a few Old English words survive. But the futility of such explanations is obvious, since, for one thing, none of these sources could have provided the material. The only reasonable conclusion is that Mrs. Curran's conscious mind was innocent both of the knowledge appearing in her automatic writings

[1] *Ibid.* pp. 383–8.

and of the verbal clothing in which that knowledge was expressed.

(2) What of the literary merit of the writings? This is not easy to assess. Dr. Prince is enthusiastic and uses the word "genius" to describe it. That there is considerable literary merit in the writings can scarcely be denied. The following is one trivial example of quality. Patience Worth, apparently amusing herself by imitating the metre of *Hiawatha*, throws off the following verse:

> "Silent standing, head uplifted,
> Yet unconquered thou art waiting;
> Thou whose loins shine like the copper
> Run of oils and naked gleaming;
> Listening through the ages rolling
> For the calling of a comrade."

Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, in a review of Dr. Prince's book, wrote that "not only Dr. Prince but other good judges have not hesitated to use the word 'genius' in describing it. I am not sure that I should like to go so far; but what writer need be ashamed of bits of proverbial philosophy like: 'Beat the hound and lose the hare'; 'It taketh a wise man to be a good fool'; 'A basting but toughens an old goose'; 'Nimble words are not nimble wits'; 'Wisdom patches the seat of learning' and 'Give me not wisdom enough to understand the universe but folly enough to tolerate it.'"

My own suggestion is that there is not here the greatness of genius but that there is a fount of inspiration which might have provided the material for a work of genius had it been expressed through the conscious mind of, say, a Coleridge, instead of finding its expression through the mind of Mrs. Curran.

Two observations of F. W. H. Myers are here worth quoting, one which remarks on the streak of "otherness" which works of inspiration possess; the other pointing out the family resemblance which runs through automatic writings. The first is: "Thus, on the one hand, when in presence of one of the great verbal achievements of the race—say the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus—it is hard to resist the obscure impression that some form of intelligence other

than supraliminal reason or conscious selection has been at work. The result less resembles the perfection of rational choice among known data than the imperfect presentation of some scheme based on perception which we cannot entirely follow." In the second, he says: "The 'messages' of a number of automatists, taken at random, will be sure to resemble each other much more closely than do the supraliminal writings of the same persons. Quite apart from their general correspondence in *ideas*—which belongs to another branch of our subject—there is among the automatic writings of quite independent automatists a remarkable correspondence of literary style. There is a certain quality which reminds one of a *translation*, or of the compositions of a person writing in a language which he is not accustomed to talk."[1]

(3) Was Patience Worth a Dorsetshire country maid of the seventeenth century, speaking through Mrs. Curran; or was she a secondary personality of Mrs. Curran's?

Our chief knowledge of secondary personalities is obtained from the study of cases of advanced hysteria. One relevant feature of these is that the alternating phases are *complementary* to one another, being in the nature of "split" portions of the total personality. There is not much resemblance between secondary personalities of this kind and Patience Worth. An important fact to remember about Mrs. Curran's automatism is that she is consciously present *in propria persona* during the whole of it. (We shall come across this important feature in another case.) Patience Worth does not *supplant* the normal Mrs. Curran, nor does she seem to be an abstraction from her. There is, indeed, some mental dissociation; that is, Mrs. Curran's normal consciousness is thrust a little to one side during the automatic writing; but "to a casual observer, no change is noted." "One most peculiar thing about this work," says Mrs. Curran, "is that while I am writing there seems to be no definite place where my consciousness ceases, and that of Patience comes in. Very early I began to notice that even while I was carefully spelling a poem, I was keenly conscious, even with an added keenness, of everything about

[1] *Human Personality*, Vol. i., pp. 98 and 100.

me and of anything regarding my person at the same time."[1] If Patience Worth is in some sense a secondary personality, she is, it would appear, an *additional* creation rather than a fragment of the normal Mrs. Curran. That such creations within a personality may occur is, for all we know, a possibility; but I do not think they should be confused with the cases of secondary and multiple personality occurring in hysteria, which seems to be quite a different thing. If secondary personalities of the type of Patience Worth are possible, they would afford an alternative to the view that Patience Worth is a discarnate entity; but, as we shall see later, they involve astonishingly complicated assumptions about the nature of the human being. They form an alternative to the discarnate theory, but scarcely a less marvellous alternative.

In the final paragraph of his review quoted above, Dr. Schiller says: "Personally, I am quite willing to subscribe to Dr. Prince's conclusion that 'either our concept of what we call the subconscious must be radically altered, so as to include potencies of which we hitherto have had no knowledge, or else some cause operating through but not originating in the subconsciousness of Mrs. Curran must be acknowledged.' The general impression of the case on my mind is to deepen the conviction that orthodox psychology and orthodox philosophy are both very far from having plumbed the depths of the soul, and that it is unreasonable to require an open-minded man to endorse their prejudices."[2]

Abyssus humanae conscientiae. The case of Patience Worth illustrates the extraordinary range and capacity of these subliminal powers. It shows how the human personality begins to tower as soon as we get behind normal consciousness. It sketches in the first few lines of the perspective which lies before psychical research and psychology. It shows how wise it is to take the measure of this perspective before attempting to standardise methods of experiment, and, incidentally, how incompetent is the experimental technique described in Chapters 12, 13, 14 and 15 to do more than scratch the surface.

[1] *The Case of Patience Worth*, p. 398.

[2] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxxvi, p. 576.

17

CROSS-CORRESPONDENCES

A Further Development of Automatic Writing

ABOUT the year 1906, an extremely interesting phase of the work of the Society for Psychical Research began. It is hard to say whether it was an experimental or an observational phase. Indeed, it contained a feature which no other investigation, so far as I am aware, has ever contained. The material to be investigated experimented on itself!

Certain ladies, interested in the work of the Society, discovered that they were able to produce automatic writing. One of them, Mrs. Verrall, was Lecturer in Classics at Newnham, and wife of the Cambridge scholar Dr. A. W. Verrall. Her daughter, Miss Helen Verrall, afterwards Mrs. Salter, was also a member of the group. Yet another was Mrs. Holland (pseudonym), a lady who had lived for some time in India. A fourth was Mrs. Willett (also a pseudonym), a lady with a remarkable automatic faculty, whose writing underwent a peculiarly interesting development. Dame Edith Lyttelton was a fifth member of the group; and there were some others who played minor parts.

None of these ladies were "mediums" or had had anything to do with spiritualism. All were highly educated and practised their automatic writing because of their interest in it and their desire to assist in a scientific experiment. Mrs. Verrall had to practise for a considerable time before her writing gave intelligent sentences. When it did so it began to write in Latin; then in Greek and English. With the others, the writing began more easily and was in English.

At the same time, the American branch of the Society for Psychical Research was investigating in America a medium of the ordinary type, Mrs. Piper. During 1906–7, it was noticed that the automatic scripts of the above ladies showed signs of corresponding with one another, and a

deliberate attempt was then made to induce correspondences to occur between these scripts and the productions of Mrs. Piper. The various automatists were then "isolated," that is to say they sent all their scripts to the Research Officer of the Society for Psychical Research, and took care not to know the contents of each other's scripts.

A study of all their writings revealed the fact that they were doing more than correspond by referring to the same topic. They were corresponding in quite a different way, by being *complementary* to one another. Something was selecting and distributing among the automatists elements of a single pattern, so that the scripts formed a kind of literary jig-saw. To discover what was going on required a high degree of literary and classical knowledge as well as ingenuity; and this work was carried out with great ability and skill chiefly by Mr. J. G. Piddington. He described the scripts of the automatists as "so to speak links in a concatenation, or cubes in a mosaic of ideas, which had been distributed among several automatists." These inter-related productions came to be called "cross-correspondences." "They are not," says Mr. Piddington, "clear-cut, isolated things with a definite beginning and complete in themselves. They are tiny bits of very complex patterns." The interesting thing is that they were spontaneous. The investigators were on the look-out for references to the same topic, but they had not thought of the cross-correspondence scheme.

These scripts were signed, and purported to come from the deceased founders and members of the Society for Psychical Research, some of whom have already been mentioned in Chapter 4. The principal communicators purported to be F. W. H. Myers, who died in 1901; Edmund Gurney, who died in 1888; Henry Sidgwick, who died in 1900; and later (for they went on for a number of years) A. W. Verrall, who died in 1912, and Henry Butcher, who died in 1910. The last was Professor of Greek in Edinburgh University.

These communicators gave clearly and candidly the reason for the cross-correspondences which they claimed to be producing. They said that they were doing it because a single theme distributed between various automatists,

none of whom knew what the others were writing, would prove that a single independent mind, or group of minds, was at the back of the whole phenomenon. Thus, it could not easily be explained by cross-telepathy among the automatists. Also, recondite points in classical literature were introduced to prove the identity of the authors, for Myers, Verrall and Butcher had all been front-rank classical scholars.

Unfortunately, the cross-correspondences, precisely on account of their complex character, are almost impossible to summarise. To appreciate the points at issue and to form a judgment on their significance, it is necessary to read them in full. Something may, however, be done towards abridging one very interesting case entitled the *Ear of Dionysius*; but although this case illustrates in a remarkable way the ingenuity of the originators, the degree of highly specialised classical knowledge required, and (to those who knew them) the personal idiosyncrasies of those purporting to communicate, it came mainly through one automatist and therefore does not illustrate the "jig-saw" feature which certain other cross-correspondences possess. These are too long and complicated to be abridged in a book in which space is a vital consideration.

First, as an example of telepathy, is a brief example of a straightforward reference to the same topic by three persons, two automatists and a medium. In 1907, Mrs. Piper was in England, giving some sittings. (The cross-correspondences proper had not then started.) On 17th April, she uttered the words "Sanatos" and "Tanatos"; on 23rd April, the word "Thanatos," and on 30th April, the word "Thanatos" three times.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Holland, writing automatically in India, wrote on the 16th April: "Maurice, Morris, Mors. And with that the shadow of death fell upon him and his soul departed out of his limbs."

Mrs. Verrall, writing in England, on 29th April, produced a script in which occurred the words: "Warmed both hands before the fire of life, It fails and I am ready to depart." The words: "Come away, Come away," and the Latin sentence: "*Pallida mors æquo pede pauperum tabernas regumque turres* (put in) *pulsat*." [Pale death with equal

foot the huts of the poor and the towers of the rich (put in) 'strikes'.]

Note that there has been selection here. The medium, Mrs. Piper, who was a poorly educated woman, and knew nothing of the classics, is selected to give the word "death" in Greek. Mrs. Holland, an educated lady with a knowledge of literature but not of the classics, is selected to give the word in Latin. Mrs. Verrall, the classical scholar of the three, gives the literary references (although one of them is in Latin). These out-of-the-way touches make it very difficult to put the coincidences down to chance or to anything but telepathy.

In the case entitled the *Ear of Dionysius*, Dr. Verrall purports to dictate the first script and addresses it to his widow. "Do you remember you did not know and I complained of your classical ignorance IGNORANCE." Then came references to Acoustics, to a Whispering Gallery, to Toil, to Slaves, to a Tyrant, to a One-eared Place, to the Fields of Enna, to Syracuse, and to the Athenian expedition against it; and the word "Orecchio" was given with the comment, "That's near." There was also a reference to Philemon, "not the Pauline Philemon." All this clearly referred to the Ear of Dionysius, which is a kind of grotto hewn out of the rock at Syracuse, made by Dionysius, who was at one time tyrant of that place. This grotto had the properties of a whispering gallery and was used by the Tyrant to overhear conversations of his prisoners, who, confined in the grotto, were compelled to work it as a quarry.

Mrs. Verrall remembered that she had once asked her husband during his lifetime about this grotto, and that he had laughingly rebuked her for her ignorance about it.

The scripts next went on to refer to the adventures of Ulysses, as given in Homer, and introduced the figure of the one-eyed monster, Polyphemus. After that, the story of the lovers, Acis and Galatea, was brought in. The scene of this story was in Sicily, and Sicily is throughout much stressed by the scripts. There is a Polyphemus in the Acis and Galatea story, and he figures as the villain of the piece —the "monster Polyphemus," he is called—who loves

Galatea, but is rejected by her and in furious jealousy crushes Acis to death with a rock. Polyphemus, Galatea and the jealousy of a rejected lover all form the theme of these scripts.

The investigators became rather puzzled, and thereupon the communicators, realizing that they were making the puzzle too difficult, supplied a hint. Polyphemus, they said, was to be conjoined with Cythera and the Ear-man, and, they added, "Cyclopean Phylox." He laboured in the stone quarries and drew upon the earlier writer for material for his satire, "Jealousy." Philoxenus of Cythera was identified by the investigators with a poet of some note in antiquity, who had lived in the court of Dionysius at Syracuse, but had been confined by him as a prisoner in the stone quarries (i.e. in the "Ear of Dionysius") because he had conceived a passion for a beautiful mistress of Dionysius named Galatea. In his confinement he revenged himself by composing a dithyramb entitled either Kyklops or Galatea, in which he represented himself as Odysseus (Ulysses) who, to take vengeance on Polyphemus (under which name he parodied Dionysius), estranged the affections of the nymph Galatea, of whom Kyklops was enamoured.

All the threads of this story were found to converge in a single narrative contained in a book of a specialist nature entitled *Greek Melic Poets*, the only source in which *all* the references found in the cross-correspondence occur. No one but a specialist in the classics would be likely to read this book; but Dr. Verrall was known to have possessed a copy and to have used it as a text-book in connection with his lectures. Few besides Drs. Verrall and Butcher *could* have worked out these labyrinthine links leading to a solution contained in a book which only a small group of front-rank scholars were aware of. There is also a great deal of personal characterisation in the manner of the scripts and in the communicators' comments, which, to those who knew the purporting communicators in life, was very convincing. This characterisation, too, has to be dealt with by *any* theory which attempts to explain the phenomenon. Add to this the fact that Mrs. Willett, through whom all this came, though well read in general literature, knew practically nothing of the classics.

Whatever may be thought of the nature of the communicators, the evidence for telepathy (either from the living or from the dead) is overwhelming. The automatists *could not* have produced these scripts by drawing on their own individual resources. And this is only one example of a large number of more or less similar productions, *each* of which contains irrefutable evidence for telepathy if for nothing more. It is merely silly to say that the evidence for telepathy is poor or non-existent until a reasonable explanation, not involving telepathy, has been given of the cross-correspondences, and until it has been shown that it applies to the facts in detail and meets all criticisms.

Cross-correspondences are a fascinating, though not an easy study; but no one who has not considered them is in a position to judge the deeper potentialities of the human personality.

In order to test as far as possible two critical suggestions which were put forward, a control-experiment was tried. One suggestion was that ordinary association of ideas on the part of the automatists is sufficient to produce cross-correspondences. The other was that telepathic leakage of ideas from one automatist to another can explain them without external agency.

To test the first hypothesis, fourteen people were chosen to represent the automatists. To each of these, twelve phrases were sent taken respectively from Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Rostand, Virgil, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Homer. Each person was asked to write down whatever words, phrases or sentences suggested themselves as being associated with these quotations The result was quite unlike any real cross-correspondence. None of the pseudo-automatists produced any allusion which was outside their normal knowledge. Such cross-references as appeared were of a momentary kind, diverging immediately after contact. There was none of the tendency manifested by the real scripts to come back to the original theme again and again.

In order to test to some extent the telepathic theory, two persons privately soaked their minds in certain selected literary topics all the time the above experiment was going on; but these topics did not come out in the pseudo-scripts.

Perhaps too much weight should not be attached to the negative result of this latter experiment, since evidence tends to show that the condition of concentrating the conscious attention on a topic is not a good one for inducing telepathy. This fact is apt to be lost sight of by those who concentrate their attention on telepathic experiments instead of taking a balanced view of the evidence as a whole.

This slight sketch gives little indication of the subtlety and interest of the cross-correspondences, and it is to be hoped that some readers will refer to the original sources in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. Clearly they open a path of the highest importance for future investigation.

18

MRS. WILLETT

Communications Ostensibly Proceeding from the Dead

THE automatic writing of Mrs. Willett (pseudonym), the principal automatist in the *Ear of Dionysius*, underwent a remarkable development as time went on. This development was spontaneous, so far as those supervising the writings were concerned, but had all the appearance of being engineered by the communicators who appeared to be controlling the writing. The latter explained quite clearly what they were doing and why they were doing it.

The report on Mrs. Willett's case by Lord Balfour is one of the most interesting documents in the history of psychical research.[1] It is impossible to form any valid opinion on the question of whether there are such things as communications from the dead without studying this report.

Although Lord Balfour speaks of Mrs. Willett's "mediumship," she was not, in the ordinary sense of the word, a medium. She possessed the faculty of automatic writing and during that writing underwent a certain kind and degree of mental dissociation; but her "mediumship" was really an advanced state of automatism and nothing more. Mrs. Willett never had a "control" such as mediums usually have; nor did she relinquish her own consciousness in favour of any kind of secondary personality. In this respect she resembled Mrs. Curran. She discovered her power of automatic writing in early girlhood, but, having no one to guide her, gave it up. In 1908 she became interested in a report on Mrs. Holland's script, and felt impelled to try again. In a letter written at that time she said: "After a few feeble attempts the script seemed to come very rapidly, but it is too *definite*, and therefore I

[1] *A Study of the Psychological Aspects of Mrs. Willett's Mediumship and the Statements of the Communicators concerning Process*, by Gerald William, Earl of Balfour, P.C., Ll.D., in *Proceedings* of the Society for Psyhical Research, Vol. xliii, pp. 41–318.

distrust its being from an external source. There are, however, one or two curious points in it (I have torn it all up). What worried me was the words seemed to form in my brain before the pen set them down, just before as if tripping on the written word—a sort of hair's-breadth beforeness. Most are signed Myers or F.W.H.M., but I can't say I think them of value. . . ."[1]

It would seem that Myers, or the communicator purporting to be Myers, used Mrs. Willett as a channel of communication from the first, when the writing was done in a nearly normal state of consciousness. In order to indicate the personality ostensibly communicating through Mrs. Willett's script, without begging the question of its identity, it will be convenient to put the suffix "W" below the name. Thus Myers_{W} means the communicator through Mrs. Willett calling himself Myers, and so on.

We must first notice that there is more to be observed in Mrs. Willett's case than the writing (or speech) itself. Just as vivid scenes appeared to Mrs. Curran as she was spelling out the descriptions, so Mrs. Willett experienced a sense of the direct presence of the communicators who were supplying the messages. She could sense their qualities and characters in an immediate way, quite different from anything known in normal perception. She could even sense their words without actually seeming to hear them. Thus, she says: "I became so suddenly and strangely aware of F.W.H.M.'s presence that I said 'Oh!' as if I had run into someone unexpectedly. During what followed I was absolutely normal. I heard nothing with my ears, but the words came from outside into my mind as they do when one is reading a book to oneself. I do not remember the exact words, but the first sentence was 'Can you hear what I am saying?'—I replied in my mind 'Yes'." "I got no impression of *appearance*, only character, and, in some way, voice or pronunciation (though this does not mean that my *ears* hear, you know!) . . . I don't feel a sense of seeing, but an intense sense of personality, like a blind person perhaps might have—and of inflections, such as amusement or emotion on the part of the speaker." And

[1] This and the following quotations in this chapter are from the report mentioned above.

again: "It is as 'minds' and 'characters' that I know them. . . ."

This is very suggestive. Is it a type of perception which, normally, we do not know? It may be objected that all this is purely subjective and imaginary and not perception of any kind. But this view has to meet the difficulty that these personal traits of the communicators, which Mrs. Willett said she sensed, were actually characteristic of them as they had been in life, and not by any means all of them were previously known to her.

In so far as Mrs. Willett's case was experimental, the communicators were the experimenters rather than those who supervised the scripts. Whatever we think they were, they quite obviously "ran" Mrs. Willett. In particular, they were very insistent that the automatic state in which she worked, wherein she retained her consciousness while she worked, should not be allowed to lapse into the "control" type of trance. Thus, on one occasion. Gurney_W, communicating through the script, said:

> Gurney_W: She is very dazed. *Look.*
>
> (Sir Oliver Lodge, who was sitting with her, saw that Mrs. Willett seemed to be a little in trance.)
>
> O. J. L.: Ought I to wake her up?
>
> Gurney_W: I will. I don't want her to develop into a second Piper.
>
> O. J. L.: No, I know you consider we have had that, and that now you are arranging something different.
>
> Gurney_W: *New.*

It will be noticed that the Willett communicators, whoever they were, were thoroughly on the spot. They spoke just as they would have in life and were quite natural. When Sir Oliver Lodge was conducting a sitting after a long absence, Gurney_W greeted him as follows:

> Gurney_W: Lodge, is that you?
>
> O. J. L.: Yes, that's me.
>
> Gurney_W: Glad to see you after such a long interval. Very glad, Lodge. How are you?
>
> O. J. L.: All right. Very glad to see you again, too

Gurney$_W$: We are getting on. People are beginning to entertain ideas as to the *possibility* of our existence and even of our identity.

O. J. L.: Yes, quite true.

Gurney$_W$: *Spade work* and on it we hope to raise the foundation of the temple. Have you anything special to speak of, because Myers is here and once he is "on", so to speak, I may not be able to break in.

When Myers did come "on," the script changed in a characteristic way and a slow and deliberate writing began. Some people state that communications purporting to come from the dead are always vapid and silly; but one can find no trace of it here.

The communicators were justified in their insistence that the Willett method of communication was better than the ordinary trance-control. They said it gave them an opportunity to use a method of communication in which direct telepathy from themselves played an important part instead of the round-about method of communicating through a control. Yet the process was much more complicated than direct telepathy. Gurney$_W$ described at length the way in which ideas had to be shepherded through the subliminal region of Mrs. Willett's personality, and how, very often, only words with which she was familiar could be used. He brought out the need for employing trains of association already present in Mrs. Willett's mind, and the danger that such associations might switch the train of ideas on to a wrong track. All this was explained and illustrated by the communicators. It is worth while quoting a rather long passage which illustrates some of these points. It occurred in a script of 11th May, 1912, Lord Balfour (G. W. B.) being present. It must be explained that, before this sitting, Lord Balfour had read a paper at Cambridge entitled *Parallelism and Telepathy*. He had also dealt with the same theme in an article previously published in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1910. Mrs. Willett may possibly have been aware of this article, but philosophy did not interest her, and she is unlikely to have read it with any comprehension. Probably she did not read it at all. In the lecture and article taken together, the three philosophical

doctrines of mind-body relation, Parallelism, Epiphenomenalism and Interactionalism, were all dealt with or at least touched upon. The script was as follows:

"Yes . . . Oh, how did I get here? It's like Alice in the looking-glass. I see a glass that seems to shut out, and then someone seems to put out a hand and pull me through. Sweet after rain ambrosial showers. [A misquotation from Tennyson's *In Memoriam.*]

(Pause) Oh, I'll try. Tennyson. (Pause) I'm seeing thoughts but I'm not catching them. What are the three tenable—I don't get that next word and then it goes on—in regard to the phenomenon of consciousness? Somebody asked a question.

Do you know Henry Sidgwick has sometimes such a quizzical look in his face. He said to me, Don't make two bites at a cherry but bolt this whole and see what happens.

(Sighs) Sounds to me very stupid. I've hunted about in my mind and I don't find anything else. What does it mean? It's only words. (Gesticulating with both hands) There, just like that is—then there's a word *that* long—(motioning with hands) consciousness.

I've got it—— Oh it's disappointing when my lips won't say it. L—— touched me, and I can say it now. [L—— was a deceased relative of Mrs. Willett's who did not communicate but sometimes seemed to help the communications in some way.]

Epiphenomenal—that's the last of the three words.

Oh! Sidgwick said (waving her hands) something to do with a room and a lot of people.

Listen not to the specious lure of the parallelistic phantasy, but nail unto the mast that complicated fragment of truth—nail unto the mast?—the flag of—— Oh, I'm so sorry, I'm afraid I've lost it. ["Nail unto the mast" was spoken interrogatively, as if the automatist was asking whether she had the right words.]

Don't go (entreatingly) I'll try again. Oh, how gentle and strong he is.

He says, Tell him to nail to the mast the flag with one word on it, which is a symbol for a complicated

fragment of truth—but he says it's the right line, he says like that—though baffling and perplexing, cleave thou to it. It's because it's only partially apprehended that the timid and the lazy mind slips back from it into the barren and easy and absolutely worthless theory, he says, of a dual (placing her two hands parallel to each other) dual, side by side, presumably independent. Oh, he says, the whole thing's full of fallacies, you can't stretch it to that, he says.

He's telling L—— something. It's so odd. L——'s knowing something which I'm not knowing, but I'm knowing that when L—— touches me I shall know it too. It's the flag word. (Triumphantly) I've got it! *Oh,* but now I've got to give it out.

Oh, I'm all buzzing. (Waving hands) I can't think why people talk about such stupid things. Such long stupid words. (Sighs and stretches herself: then places her hands side by side, saying) That's gone away now.

Now it's a thing like this (drawing with her finger in the air) [Drawing of wriggly line.] It's like a plait —it's woven strands.

Oh! I see it a hundred ways but I can't get it out.

(G. W. B.: "I understand.")

Somebody says, Don't help her.

Oh, I think I can draw it better. [Drawing of some lines and underneath is written INT UR AC SHUN.]

Edmund makes me laugh. He says, Well think of Ur of the Chaldees. He's making a joke, and they're very angry with him: but the point of it is the terrible effect of disembodiment on one singularly sensitive to shades of sound. He says that Ur would make Fred shudder.

I must try it you know, it's perfectly ridiculous. (Here INT UR AC SHUN was added at the foot of the drawing.)

Henry says, Thread the maze, but don't lose that strand. There's a lot of confused thinking suggested by that word to many minds. You've all of you only been fingering at the outsides of the theory, but it's there where the gold lies.

Consciousness (waving hands) and matter, mind and matter; and he says, There was a line about the will that felt the fleshly screen. [Browning, *The Last Ride Together.*] Oh, oh, there are some very mystical [word omitted from the record here: perhaps "meanings",] wrapped up in those lines of Tennyson's. He says, I have quoted Browning, but the mind of Tennyson playing on the mysteries of consciousness—the phenomena of consciousness—is extraordinarily interesting to anyone studying the mysteries—— Oh, what a word—of in-ter-ac-tion-alism (pronounced slowly, syllable by syllable).

What is the parallelistic theory? (Expression of great disgust.) To have to come all the way to talk about these things! He says, just to say that. He says that Frank, I and Frank, he says, are a splendid combination in studying the interaction of mind and matter, because you want biological and philosophical knowledge. But, he says, I can't now say what I want to.

I simply cannot go on any longer; that must be all. [Probably a remark by the automatist on her own account; at least so I thought at the time from the tone in which the words were uttered.] (Laughs heartily) Edmund says, This is really the last bite. The interaction—I'm not sure that word's quite right. It's either action or interaction. It isn't interaction [? Int ur ac shun], though he says it might be interaction for the interactionalist.

The light cast upon interaction by the researches into human faculty. It's very odd: do you know they can have machines for telling you the pressure in boilers? Well, there's a machine they've got to find out what's the pressure in me, and all that (putting her hands to her head) is too full. It's full to painfulness.

(G. W. B.: "Hadn't you better stop?")

He says, Just let me throw this, and then that's all. You can't make parallelism square with the conclusions to which recent research points. *Pauvres parallelistes!* They're like drowning men clinging to spars. But the epiphenomenalistic bosh (pronouncing with difficulty) that's simply blown away. It's one of the blind alleys of human thought.

Oh! I don't want to hear any more: I'm tired.

And the other and perhaps more specious kind of bosh has got to go too.

(Laughing) Edmund spoke of the philosophic omelettes. He said research is breaking lot of eggs, and some schools had best get their egg-whisks ready."

There are a number of interesting points here. In the first place, if these are the dead speaking, they have all their wits about them. Then there is Mrs. Willett's running commentary. She is always there, interjecting her own comments. The misquoted line from Tennyson apparently occurs because certain passages in Tennyson were thought by the communicators (as appears later) to bear on their views about personality. They are emphatic about them. They will have nothing to do with parallelism or epiphenomenalism and accuse thinkers of not looking deeply enough into the interactionist theory, which they consider to be on the right lines. But it is far from easy to get all this through the channels of Mrs. Willett's subliminal self; and she is bored by philosophy and cannot grasp the long words. Even when she has got the word "interaction," there is the greater difficulty of giving it out. In some way L—— seems to help, though he does not communicate. Gurney's irresistible impulse to be humorous (quite characteristic of the living Gurney); Henry Sidgwick's interjections on the philosophical issue; Mrs. Willett's comments, such as: "Don't go. . . . I'll try again," "He's telling L—— something," "Oh, I'm all buzzing . . .", etc., make up a piece of dramatisation which it is difficult to believe is feigned. If it is, then the best of our dramatists may learn a good deal from the subliminal self of the ordinary person.

The communicators uphold the view that there are *grades* in the personality. It seems to me that the whole of psychical research points this way, and to the view that the personality is a multiplicity in unity of a kind which it is almost impossible to express in words. We find in Mrs. Willett's scripts such phrases as the following: "He says, Ranges of varying depth." "It's *One*: and an enlightening point of view—I think it is—is to conceive of it as allied

and distinguishable—I missed a word—and then grouped round one nucleus." "He says, There are many gradations. . . . He says, There is an ascending chain." "He says, The ascending scale bound by gold chains round the feet of God." [A reference to Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur.*] Again, Gurney$_W$ speaks of "the profundities of the subliminal self which grade up and merge into what I have spoken of as the transcendental self, the central unity. . . ." It is this view of personality as extended and also graded in some hierarchical fashion, now emerging from psychical research, which seems to be so important. The facts, when we look into them, not only support this view; they *demand* it.

There is another example of this unity in multiplicity in Mrs. Willett's case, this time not occurring in connection with any of the communicators. On 30th October, 1913, she had the following experience. (Her statement was taken down the same day.)

Her letters were brought to her bedroom in the morning and she opened a large envelope and took out the letter while some larger papers remained inside. After reading the letter, she says: "I picked up the envelope to take out the enclosures when I suddenly felt a *thundering* sort of knock-down blow conviction that I must not do so. I looked at Sir O. J. L.'s letter again and I now (2 p.m.) remember of it this much; that he sent me a copy of a script of mine . . . having been directed by Mr. G. W. Balfour to do so. I *think* he said I was to compare it with the original. But still I felt that not to be conquered 'push' not to take out of the envelope the enclosures. Then an odd thing happened. I did not know clearly what I was going to do and my mind seemed not to work —or rather *two* minds seemed to be at work and not to be acting together. Mind No. 1 got my body up and walked it across the room to the door and put me outside. . . . But Mind No. 2 (which was 'me' as I know myself) couldn't make out why it was that I was there. I stood a few seconds and then looked down at my hands, and saw I had Sir O. J. L.'s envelope in one and his letter in the other. Mind No. 1 took my hand and put the letter back into the envelope and walked me down a flight of

stairs and up another flight. Mind No. 2 looked on and wondered. When I reached the outside of Mr. Willett's door the two minds flashed together, and I at once knew, somehow, what I was to do. I went in and handed him the envelope, made him fetch a pencil and write down the time and date and what I told him—viz: that I had read a letter it, the envelope, contained[1] but not the enclosures."'

It was better for evidential reasons concerned with her work that Mrs. Willett should not read the enclosures; but the interesting thing is the way in which the personality divided. Mrs. Willett felt herself to be identified with Mind No. 2; yet she regarded Mind No. 1 as part of her own personality and not as a stranger. It performed intelligent actions and made use of her body to do so. Finally, it united with Mind No. 2. The lesson is surely that identity of selfhood is not dependent on numerical separateness in the way we habitually think it is. The category of number seems in some way to be superimposed by the body on that which is not itself either singular or plural, as though one looked at some continuous substance through a grid, and saw it as divided though it was not so.

There are many other highly instructive things in this report. The kind of experiences she has, for example, at the end of a sitting: "I must come back you know. It's just like waking up in prison from a dream that one has been at home. Don't you ever walk out of yourself? Aren't you tired of being always yourself? It's so heavenly to be out of myself—when I am everything, and everything else is me." And at the end of another: "Oh! Fred! Fred! So strange to be somebody else. To feel somebody's heart beating inside you, and somebody else's mind inside your mind. And there isn't any time or place and either you're loosed or they're entered, and you all of a sudden know everything there ever was. You understand everything. It's like every single thing and time and thought and everything brought down to one point." Or: "I can see the thoughts but it's so difficult to get the words."

It is interesting to follow Gurney$_W$'s account of the

[1] *Ibid.* pp. 112–3.

parts played by telepathy, telæsthesia, inspiration and "excursus" in getting the messages through. It is also interesting to note that Gurney$_W$ says to Lord Balfour: "I can't see your mind, Gerald, but I can feel you in some dim way through her." But, to appreciate all this, it is necessary to study the report itself.

One other thing is worth illustrating at some length—the extraordinary wealth and completeness of the (apparently self-created) sense-imagery with which Mrs. Willett can, on occasion, be surrounded when in her automatic state. The following was dictated by her when in this state on 17th December, 1913. "It's a picture—a picture that I love and often see. Marble pillars everywhere—a most heavenly scene. A company of men—small company discussing everything in heaven and earth and really reaching the heights of reason—almost unconscious of their visible surroundings. It is a sort of parable of life. . . . Oh, how I wish I could tell what I know. You know, to ordinary people those men who sat talking there long ago are just historical figures, interesting from a hundred points of view, but dead men. For you know there's nothing dead in greatness, because there can't be, because all greatness is an emanation from the changeless absolute. That's why I know those people as if they were alive to-day. I know them much better than many of the people I live with—especially the older man, the Master. He had disciples, you know. . . . The meal is for the most part over, and there's a sort of hush of the spirit; because in that quick interchange of thought new ideas have arisen, and the man that they all look up to, he's borne very far aloft on the wings of the Spirit. And suddenly on the quiet of it all there bursts the sound of revelling coming nearer and nearer—flute-players! (*ecstatically*) Oh! Is it Bacchus and his crew? Anyhow there's something rather Bacchanalian about it. They're getting nearer and nearer, and they're hammering on the door, and then in they come. *My* people are all disturbed, and there's great toasting. They take it all in very good part, and they revel away. There are wreaths of flowers, and cups passing, loud jokes. And then, do you know, by degrees some of the crowd melt away, and some of the people go to sleep. And then the

whole thing ends up with such a majestic thing I think; just that one figure, when the interruption is over, he stays there like some great beacon shining out above the clouds, walking on the heights of thought; and the absolute silence reigns, and there he sits. Do you know that man's as real to me as if I could touch him! He's an ugly man, only I feel he's sublimely great. You know I've not got to be tied up always to myself. I can get up and walk about in other worlds; and I very often like to walk through the room where that scene took place." Then came an interruption, and she finished with the words: "How *nothing* time is. All human experience is *One*. We are no shadows nor do we pursue shadows. Pilgrims in Eternity. We few—we few—we happy band of *Brothers*."

This reflects some literary passages; but the point is that the scene is, to Mrs. Willett, so real and so convincing, that, for the time being, she seems to herself to be in another and perfectly real world. Yet she (that is to say some subconscious element in her personality) must have created that world. The scene is taken from a passage in Plato's *Symposium*; yet Mrs. Willett, when told this, did not know what it meant. Even the word "symposium" appeared to convey no meaning to her. It is a striking example of the kind of thing which is possible when consciousness is displaced from its normal position of control, and of the divided, yet unitary, character of personality. We are apt to take this faculty for creating an entire sensory environment far too lightly. It is a staggering achievement.

It is curious that the lucid Willett communicators have next to nothing to say about the conditions of their present existence. Gurney_W did, on one occasion, say that no words could express them. Critics will seize on this assertion as a convenient evasion; but, if we read the account given by Gurney_W of the psychological machinery involved in passing messages through Mrs. Willett's personality, we see that, if it is true, the sensitive only has access to that part of the communicator's mind which can link itself with incarnate thought. Much that Gurney_W understands perfectly well would, according to this view, be untransmissible. This, after all, is very natural; in fact, almost inevitable. Our thought is formed for dealing with the physical world

and *must* be highly specialised. How can it deal with things beyond its range? Lord Balfour comments: "The suggestion seems to be that the subliminal of the discarnate uses categories which are beyond the reach of incarnate minds, much as the categories employed by the human mind are beyond the comprehension of the mind of animals." If there is difficulty in transmitting even the common word "interaction," how much more difficulty would there be in describing a type of existence in which spatio-temporal relations, and perhaps many other things, are different from those we are accustomed to. Yet, it seems probable that the Willett script provided an unusually good and clear channel of communication. The average control-medium probably distorts in a grotesque manner what is being transmitted. Even relatively good automatists may provide a pretty poor channel. It is worth noting that in the early days of Mrs. Holland's automatic writing, Myers_{H} said: "The nearest simile I can find to express the difficulties of sending a message—is that I appear to be standing behind a sheet of frosted glass—which blurs sight and deadens sounds—dictating feebly—to a reluctant and somewhat obtuse secretary. A feeling of terrible impotence burdens me—I am so powerless to tell what means so much—I cannot get into communication with those who would understand and believe me."[1] Another point is that the communicators are always averse to wasting time on things which cannot be evidential. As Gurney_{W} once said about an irrelevant topic: "You won't get proof of survival that way." They probably would not waste time in trying to transmit a description of the world they live in when they know that there is practically no chance of its getting through in recognisable form, and no possibility of its being evidentially confirmed.

Although they claim to have a wider experience than we have in this life, they do not lay claim to any transcendental knowledge. Indeed, they are emphatic in stressing their ignorance. Thus, Myers_{W} says:

"Remember there is as much room in some ways for speculation here as with you, and many mysteries remain

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxi, p. 230.

mysteries only approached from other and higher standpoints.

"I am now going to begin fresh experiments, you might tell Mrs. V., when opportunity occurs, that the need for experiment from this side has not been sufficiently grasped on your side.

"Much more than you suspect is absolutely hidden from me [Myers.] The small amount in one way of accretion of knowledge which succeeds [Myers] bodily dissolution is a surprise to every spirit that crosses the Rubicon."

While Gurney$_W$ says:

"You never seem to realise how little we know. I'm not—sometimes I know and can't get it through, but very often I don't *know*."

It is impossible in an epitome as brief as this to give any adequate idea of the impressiveness of Mrs. Willett's scripts. But my hope is that a few readers, who value fact before pre-formed opinion, will turn to the original report. Meanwhile it is worth asking what those who watched the production of the evidence thought of the communicators. Unfortunately, Lord Balfour could not publish the most cogent portion of the evidence on account of its privacy. "It would be impossible to do justice to the argument in favour of spirit communication," he says, "on the basis of the Willett phenomena without violating confidences which I am bound to respect." And again: "If I had before me only those Willett scripts to which I have been referring, I frankly admit that I should have been at a loss whether to attribute them to subliminal activity or to a source entirely outside the personality of the medium. Probably, like Dr. Walter Prince, I should be content to suspend judgment. But, having before me the whole of the Willett scripts, and being in a position to compare them with the scripts of other automatists of our group and with facts known to me but not known to Mrs. Willett herself, I am personally of opinion that they contain evidence of supernormally acquired knowledge which no mere subliminal mentation will suffice to account for. My readers are not in this position, and for reasons stated in the introduction to this paper I cannot put them in possession of the considerations that have chiefly weighed with me. All they

have to go upon in the way of evidence of supernormal communications is that provided by the papers already published in the *Proceedings* of the Society and mentioned in the introduction. I cannot complain if they do what I should probably do in their place and suspend judgment."

In the end Lord Balfour became convinced, cautiously and slowly, that the communicators were indeed those whom they purported to be. There are certain personal touches in the scripts, possible no doubt for an outsider to explain away, but especially cogent to those who knew the purporting communicators in life. For example, at one time a certain new and disjointed type of script began to appear and the investigators wanted to know how far it was intentional on the part of the communicators and how far due to difficulties of transmission. Questions were asked about it as follows:

O. J. L.: There is another question I want to ask. We have had lately long lists of quotations, so many and so widely supplied that it would appear as if cross-correspondence must occasionally occur by accident. Some of the group feel that. They want to know whether you are sending these of set purpose.

Gurney$_W$: Yes, who says so?

O. J. L.: Well, we have been talking it over lately with G. W. B. and J. G. P. and Mrs. S.

Gurney$_W$: Do they suggest shorter scripts?

O. J. L.: No, they do not want to suggest anything definite, only to find out whether the scripts which are arriving are considered on your side quite wise and satisfactory.

Gurney$_W$: Do you mean the M.V. case or W.?

O. J. L.: Oh, I do not mean W. only; I mean Verrall and Holland also. We think that sceptics will claim that the cross-correspondences are accidental; also that the meaning is so obscure that we may miss it, for we assume that besides cross-correspondence you wish to convey a definite meaning too.

Gurney$_W$: They were allusive. You must get through a good bulk of matter to get in what you want said from our standpoint. They are not without threads of

connection. But listen. Those threads extend also in subliminal of automatist. Thus if I would say *fire*, I, Gurney, might make allusion to Phœbus or to Zoroaster. Her subliminal *may* conceivably go one better and shove in Salamander.

O. J. L.: Yes, well, that is what we rather suspected, that subliminal activity was mixed with your intention.

Gurney$_W$: What?

O. J. L. repeated.

Gurney$_W$: Who? Woven strands. Pick out the golden thread. . . .

The above passage gave the first clear hint that there was something peculiar about the process by which disjointed scripts were produced. It was not until some months later that the subject was resumed. In the interval Gurney$_W$ had been expressing a strong desire to be placed in direct communication with me, but Mrs. Willett herself, whom I had met for the first time only a few days before the date of the script just quoted, had felt a very natural reluctance to add a comparative stranger to the number of her "sitters" hitherto confined to Mrs. Verrall and Sir Oliver Lodge. Gurney, however, insisted (he and I had been close friends in days gone by) and it was ultimately arranged that I should have a sitting on June 4th, 1911. It is evident from the subjoined script that Gurney was anxious to explain to me certain aspects of the process of communication.

Script of May 21st, 1911:

Gurney$_W$: I wish I could get you to understand why I wanted to speak to Gerald. What I wanted to say was for his information and not yours—that is why I refused to put it into script. You don't understand his point of view. But it is completely intelligible to me. He is interested in the process as distinct from the *product*. And it was about the process that I wanted to speak. And the less you know of the process the better . . . because the recipient is best left in ignorance of the method. But it does not follow that the investigator need be. . . .

A very long script follows dealing further with this question of process. The point of what I have quoted is the complete understanding shown by Gurney$_W$ of this whole question of the process involved in the new type of script and of Lord Balfour's interest in it and of the desirability of going into the matter directly with him and not pouring it out before Mrs. Verrall, who was one of the automatists. It was perfectly true. Lord Balfour was, as the whole of his report on Mrs. Willett shows, emphatically interested in the *process* of the communications.

If this is all a piece of play-acting on the part of some fragment of Mrs. Willett's personality, it discloses a quintessence of dramatic skill which strikes one dumb with amazement.

Mrs. Sidgwick, too, was gradually convinced of the genuineness of the communicators. She was a woman of outstanding ability and soundness of judgment, and in 1913 disclosed the position she had reached in a paper which she then read. "In the meanwhile," she said, "I should like to conclude by saying that, though we are not yet justified in feeling any certainty, I myself think that the evidence is pointing towards the conclusion that our fellow workers are still working with us." Further experience deepened this conviction. Her brother, in a paper read in 1932, said: "Conclusive proof of survival is notoriously difficult to obtain. But the evidence may be such as to produce *belief*, even though it falls short of conclusive proof. I have Mrs. Sidgwick's assurance—an assurance which I am permitted to convey to the meeting—that, upon the evidence before her, she herself is a firm believer both in survival and in the reality of communication between the living and the dead." Many will disagree; but none are likely to be in a better position to form a valid judgment so far as the present evidence is concerned.

19

CONTROL-MEDIUMS

Control-Mediumship and its Problems

THE first thing that will strike the reader is that the communications coming through Mrs. Willett are very unlike those which come through the average medium. This is perfectly true; but Mrs. Willett was different from the average control-medium, and the messages came in a different way. The control-medium does not remain herself during trance but her consciousness disappears and another, that of the control, takes its place. This is not quite always the case. Though the medium's consciousness is never on the spot, sometimes the control abdicates and allows the ostensible communicator to communicate directly through the medium's voice. But whether the communications arrive directly or at second-hand through the control, they are not so clear and good, even at their best, as those through Mrs. Willett.

The controls of mediums usually claim to have been deceased human beings and often assume romantic names. Mrs. Piper, whose case was carefully studied for many years by the Society for Psychical Research, had a remarkable variety of controls, which included Julius Cæsar, "Moses of Old," Longfellow, Sir Walter Scott, George Eliot and many more. Three others were entitled Imperator, Rector and Prudens. Some of them talked incredible nonsense; yet Mrs. Piper's phenomena gave incontestable evidence of knowledge which she could not normally have gained. During the long period that she was under observation, the possibility of her obtaining information by fraudulent and normal methods was fully investigated. Everyone who had much to do with her agreed that nothing less than telepathy could account for her phenomena.

A study of the Piper case makes it clear that the factors involved are complex. The phenomena constitute a

problem to be unravelled; not one to be dismissed on the strength of a superficial judgment, as many critics tend to do. The long and careful report on the case written by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick[1] shows what subtleties it contains.

The quality of Mrs. Piper's communicators varied with the time, the place and the sitters. Never at any time was there anything approaching the clarity and convincingness of the Willett communicators. At their best, the communicators were plausible; at the intermediate level they were flat and insipid; at their worst they were absurd, while one or two were certainly false. Space is lacking in which to illustrate different types of communicator and communication; but the following summary is taken from Mrs. Sidgwick's report: "First, although there have been veridical communications, communicators cannot be taken at their face value, as they are sometimes manifestly false, though even when false the dramatic distinctness of communicator and control is maintained. Secondly, suspicion is thrown on the alleged machinery of communication both by its manifest adaptation to concealing of ignorance, to hedging and to covering up of false tracks; and by the inconsistencies and absurdities in the accounts given of it. Thirdly, there is, however, evidence that the dramatic communicator is, on some occasions, something more than a conscious dramatisation by the control, since the latter sees him apparently as an externalised vision. Fourthly, on the other hand, there is also evidence for more merging of control and communicator, especially in the matter of joint control of Mrs. Piper's organism than the trance personalities admit. All these points being taken into account, grave doubts are thrown on the genuineness at any time of the dramatic presentation of the communicator. Veridical communications are received, some of which, there is good reason to believe, come from the dead and therefore imply a genuine communicator in the background. But the dramatisation of even genuine communicators, with the whole dramatic machinery employed is probably merely dream-like."

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxviii.

The suggested conclusions which emerge from this analysis are: (1) *As dramatically presented*, the communicator is a psychological construct of the medium's. (2) Yet there is reason to believe that a genuine communicator, in some cases at any rate, exists in the background and uses this psychological construct by informing it to a greater or less degree with its own individuality. Something like a lay figure, *representing* the communicator, acts as a vehicle through which the genuine communicator can manifest himself with more or less success. Again I quote Mrs. Sidgwick: "Of course, communication with the dead, when it occurs, must imply a real communicator in the background, but the point is that this does not necessitate either the dramatic communicator or the control being other than phases or elements of Mrs. Piper. Nor does it exclude the possibility that the dramatic communicator is a fiction or a dream or a hallucination of the control, each of which things it sometimes appears to be. That it is with phases or elements—centres of consciousness—of Mrs. Piper and not with entities independent of her that the sitter is in direct communication seems to me for the reasons given to be the hypothesis which best fits the facts so far as we know them: that under which they most readily fall into an intelligible order and are most easily interpreted. And it is also a hypothesis against which no valid arguments have, so far as I have seen, been adduced." These suggestions may prove to be a key to the character of control-trance communicators.

The above conclusions were arrived at many years ago, and the reader may regard Mrs. Piper's case as *vieux jeu* and ask for something more up-to-date. I quote it because I believe that very few people are acquainted with this analysis. More modern material, produced by control-mediums, could be cited; but it would be of little use because the same careful study has not been given to it. The Piper case still remains the classical instance of a scientifically investigated control-medium.

It is noticeable that poor communicators are shifty and suggestible, while good ones are firm and stick to their points. This is not easy to account for either on the wholly discarnate or the wholly secondary-personality theories;

but can be explained on the joint theory, which allows for varying degrees of self-expression through a psychological construct provided by the medium. We are not, then, faced by two flat alternatives, either (1) the communicator is, in literal completeness, the person he claims to be, or (2) the communicator is a secondary-personality of the medium. We are probably dealing with a blend of the two.

Another control-medium, whose work has received study by the Society for Psychical Research, is Mrs. Osborne Leonard. Her mediumship is of high quality and has been studied by careful investigators, who have taken accurate precautions to eliminate uncertainty about the results. These precautions consisted: (1) in an anonymous introduction of the sitters where possible, (2) in taking every care not to give information to the medium in the course of the sittings, (3) in having a shorthand record made of everything said. Two investigators went further and employed a detective agency to discover whether Mrs. Leonard had any system for gathering information such as is said to be employed by some professional mediums. No such system was discovered, and it must be emphasised that not the slightest suspicion of any kind has ever attached itself to Mrs. Osborne Leonard. Besides, the kind of information given by her often precludes any such method. For example, in one series of sittings, Una, Lady Troubridge and Miss Radclyffe Hall had taken all the precautions above-mentioned, including that of anonymity; yet they were told of a scene which had occurred on one particular evening of a holiday they had passed in Teneriffe. A precipitous place they had visited was unmistakably described, with a mule going along a track and the sun setting over a "bank" and a road composed of cinders on which they were walking. The whole scene was at once recognised; but a complete Gestapo organisation could not have nosed it out and produced it on the right occasion to anonymous sitters.

Two facts may be stated categorically. If we confine our attention to sittings with control-mediums which have been carried out by responsible investigators, (1) no hypothesis of fraud, fishing, guessing or chance-coincidence will suffice to explain the knowledge manifested. (2) The evidence for telepathy, either from the living or from the dead, is quite

inescapable and overwhelming. Some critics may deny this. It is often loosely stated that no conclusive evidence for telepathy exists; but those who say this always avoid specific facts and remain in a region of vague statement and innuendo. No one who has really looked into these facts has been able to suggest any reasonable explanation which avoids telepathy.

Mrs. Leonard has one control, a childish personality calling herself Feda, and claiming to have once been an Indian girl. She may be a phase of Mrs. Leonard's personality, or possibly something more complex. She is moderately intelligent and apparently does her best to pass on accurately the messages from communicators. Occasionally she stands aside and allows a communicator to speak directly. It is impossible to quote communications through Mrs. Leonard at length. One short example must suffice. In the case from which this extract is taken a good deal of veridical information was given about a boy, Bobby Newlove, who had died. The point of this extract is merely to illustrate the style of Feda's delivery; but it must be explained that it is taken from what is called a "proxy" case, that is to say, a case in which the sitter was a representative of Bobby Newlove's relations, who knew very little about the facts.

Feda: The little boy has been trying to get in touch with him before.

[His people wrote: "We have had very vague messages from local mediums."]

Feda: You said a few weeks since he passed over Feda feels it would be several months now.

[I was informed that the child had died some three months before this sitting, i.e. on August 12th, 1932.]

Feda: Glands; ask if he had anything the matter with his glands. When I get anything like that it helps to find out if I am getting the right one.

[Mr. Hatch replied: "I do not know whether the glands are affected in diphtheria, but it is probable."

I was equally ignorant, but on referring to books discovered, as did Mr. Hatch, that the glands *are* affected by diphtheria. . . .]

Feda: All boys are fond of cakes and things, but a little while before he passed over I get such a feeling of a lot of cakes and cooking going on as if for some special occasion.

[This is vague. The only fact at all relevant is that, at some time, within six months of passing, Bobby and a friend, after having studied a cookery book, had a grand toffee-making.]

Feda: Do you know if he was connected with a town, not London but a town, not one of the biggest in the Provinces.

[This was, as I knew, correct for Nelson where Bobby had lived.]

Feda: Is there something to do with a place—does anybody go there to do some special study, not like Oxford, or Cambridge, Eton, or Harrow.

C. D. T.: No, it is a manufacturing town.

Feda: The studying they are doing is not so much of a scholastic kind. It is more as if they are learning to do something in a practical way.

C. D. T.: And who is this that is studying?

Feda: Somebody connected with the boy, like making a study of how to make something, like specialising in the making of something, not just making it and turning it out with a machine, but a kind of study of it.

[After a short break this subject was continued. . . .]

Feda: It is a busy place, but not one of the very biggest of those towns. I don't think you would call it the biggest of those towns, and yet it is a largish place where they are concentrating on important things.

C. D. T.: I should say that is correct so far as I know.

[Mr. Hatch wrote: "This is unquestionably an accurate description of Nelson."][1]

More facts were given in this style about the situation of Nelson and the work that was carried on there; and some appropriate things were said about the putting together of hard things like stone in lumps, which applied to a cross made for Bobby's grave by a workman who was a friend of his. The case when read in full is an interesting one,

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xliii, pp. 444–5.

unknown information being given about the circumstances preceding Bobby's death. But the point to note is the character of control-trance messages as compared with those produced through advanced automatism, as with Mrs. Willett. Note the tentative, questioning style of Feda's statements and compare them with the crisp, confident statements of Gurney$_W$. Names present a difficulty, but Feda struggles with them and gets them through after several shots at words more or less like them.

The upshot of Mrs. Leonard's communications, taken as a whole, is that they present us with many true facts about communicators, which Mrs. Leonard could not possibly have known, as well as much appropriate description and characterisation. There is clearly considerable limitation. We found some limitation in the Willett case: with control-mediums it is more marked. Moreover, it seems probable that there is also a good deal of distortion. We are faced with an even more difficult psychological problem in the case of control-mediumship than in the case of automatism.

It was mentioned that the above extract was taken from a "proxy" case. These cases have been thought by some to increase the strength of the evidence that the messages come from the dead. If the relations or friends of the deceased person who purports to communicate are present at the sitting, it is supposed that the information given might be subconsciously extracted by the medium from their minds and served up dramatically as coming from the communicator. But if they are not there and their place is taken by some distant friend or acquaintance who knows little about the communicator or his affairs, then, it is said, the information cannot have been drawn from his mind and must be presumed to come from the deceased communicator.

In point of fact, true information seems to be given just as well at these proxy cases as when the relations are present: but to my mind it does not seem at all certain that the absence of the relatives would necessarily rule out telepathy from their minds. After all, telepathy has nothing to do with distance. It might, however, be said that their presence might, in some way, psychologically stimulate it.

20

FRENCH SENSITIVES

A Different Type of Paranormal Faculty

THE word "medium" is not a fortunate one: it begs the question of function and has undesirable associations. A better term for those individuals in whom the subliminal self habitually signals to consciousness is "sensitive." Sensitivity takes many different forms, as may be seen by studying the important and interesting research, extending over many years, which was carried out in France by Dr. Eugène Osty, Director of the Institut Métapsychique International in Paris. He was a medical practitioner, who, having become greatly interested in psychical research, devoted his whole time to the work of this institution. Psychical investigators in this country are agreed that Osty's work is reliable and important and his opinion valuable.

His sensitives possessed remarkable gifts, though they differed widely among themselves, and also from those we have previously been dealing with. His book *La Connaissance Supra-Normale*, translated into English under the title *Supernormal Faculties in Man*, as well as his contributions to the *Revue Métapsychique*, are of great importance for anyone who wishes to be well acquainted with the factual side of this subject. The quality of the evidence must, as usual, be checked by reference to the sources.

While some of Osty's sensitives entered a kind of trance, it was not the trance of the control-medium, but something more akin to a spontaneous hypnosis. Others of his sensitives gave their information in a nearly normal state, perhaps in a condition somewhat similar to that of automatic writers. All, however, had this feature in common; they did not give information about abstract or impersonal events but about events which were connected with the lives of the persons they were in contact with. They did not, for example, prophesy the coming of war as a public event; but they foresaw situations in which particular people

afterwards found themselves as a result of the war. For instance, one sensitive told a person that she saw him digging long galleries and giving orders to soldiers.

Contact had first to be established between the sensitive and the inquirer, and then the sensitive seemed able to roam freely up and down the inquirer's life, seeing events in his future as well as in his past. One way of making this contact, which to our minds seems extraordinary and perplexing, was to hand the sensitive an object belonging to the inquirer.[1] The object appeared to help in some way, though how it did so remains a mystery.

This fact had been observed before, and had been named "psychometry" by an anthropologist called Buchanan. The term is unfortunate and misleading, for it has nothing whatever to do with mental measurement; but it has acquired a certain currency and it will be better to use it. The phenomenon has also been called "object-reading," but this term also is open to objection as begging the question of how the object works.

Osty, referring to one of his best sensitives, says: "The many divers experiments I have made with Mme. Morel have taught me that the object placed in her hands avails to set her faculty in action, not by the fact of having belonged to such and such a person, but by having been touched by that person." This was seen because, if an object belonging to A. was brought by B. and given to C. for transmission to Mme. Morel, she would begin by describing C. who had touched it last; then, if told to go back, would describe B. and finally the owner of the object A. This makes the role of the object very puzzling. If touching the object is effective, one might think that the act of touching it impressed something on the material of which the object is made; but the summary of his observations, which Osty gives, would seem to discount this view. The most important of his observations are: (1) After the sensitive, by holding the object, has once achieved psychological connection or *rapport* with the owner or contactor, the object may be destroyed without affecting the sensitive's power to give information about him. Psychological *rapport* with the contactor having once been established, informa-

[1] Bodily contact between sensitive an d sitter acted in the same way

tion is sometimes given about events which happened to him after the object has been destroyed. (2) The material of which the object is made does not matter. (3) If objects used in this way are allowed to touch one another, it does not make any difference. (4) The length of time during which the owner has possessed the object or made contact with it does not matter. (5) The lapse of time since the owner last touched the object does not matter. (6) When once the sensitive has entered into the life of the owner of the object, the *whole* of that life is accessible and not merely the portion of it during which he possessed the object.

It seems from these facts that the information acquired cannot in any sense be "locked up" in the object itself. The role of the object would seem to be rather to canalise the sensitive's faculty and concentrate it in the right direction, though we have no information as to how it does so. It may be, however, that we tend to think of this so-called "object-reading" in too objective a way. "There are some subjects," says Osty, "when exercising metagnomy on persons close to them who prefer indirect to direct contact. Mme. de Berly asks the person she is cognising to cover a piece of paper with writing or any kind of drawing or signs. She looks at this, crushes it in her hands and, if the mental images are slow to form, places it against her forehead, an action which seems the most effective mode of arousing the faculty. By proceeding in this manner she directs her faculty entirely upon the writer, whereas, with nothing in her hand, she would fall under the influence of the other person present." The function of the paper here is evidently to assist certain thoughts to pass from the subliminal to the conscious mind of the sensitive. We have heard of the lecturer who became dumb if he was not holding a piece of chalk, not because of anything to do with the physical properties of chalk but because the feeling of chalk in his hands gave him a certain confidence and assisted the particular ideas he wanted to rise up into consciousness. It may be that something similar occurs in so-called "psychometry." Yet this explanation alone seems scarcely sufficient; for we find that a miscellaneous assortment of devices has a similar effect.

"When they work on an individual distant in space and time," says Osty, "most percipients require an object coming from the individual to the cognised; with some few it is enough that the experimenter should be thinking of the person. Among percipients working in what seems a waking state, some only need their own mental impulse. Others excite the faculty by endless devices. . . . Some look at the hands, some the writing, others use playing-cards, a crystal ball, a glass of water, a candle, coffee-grounds spilt on a plate, a heap of pins thrown on the carpet, etc., etc." People think it superstitious to pay attention to such foolish and apparently irrelevant devices; but clearly they are devices for inducing one level of the personality to communicate with another, and it does not matter what they are so long as they work. Moreover, the use of an object is not essential. Contact can be made between the sensitive and the desired person by verbal direction only. For example, on one occasion Osty, thinking of a relation recently dead, said to one of his sensitives, Mlle. de Berly: "Call one of my relations who died a short time since." She had never seen this relation, nevertheless she at once gave a correct and detailed description of him, including an account of a peculiar malady from which he had suffered. But the holding of an object undoubtedly helps and is often immediately effective in producing results. On one occasion a photograph of the object seems to have done as well as the object itself.

Some of the facts told about the possessors of these objects were in the future at the time of telling, and were subsequently verified. Osty says: "Twelve years of experiment with many metagnomic percipients and a considerable number of persons have given me absolute certainty that there are human beings who can foretell the future of other persons. I say *the future of other persons*, I do not say the future in general, which I have not verified personally. I am certain of this just as I am certain of what we call the earth, the sun, the stars, minerals, vegetables and animals. It is a fact verifiable by experiment against which our prejudgments will not avail now that men of science have the courage to investigate the facts."

It is worth noticing that the French physiologist, Charles

Richet, was convinced of this, too. "A definite conclusion follows the facts," he says. "Precognition is a demonstrated verity. It is a strange, paradoxical and seemingly absurd fact, but one that we are compelled to admit. . . . The explanation will come (or will not come) later. The facts are none the less authentic and undeniable. There are premonitions."[1] This conclusion, as we have seen, is supported by much other evidence.

Osty's evidence is full of cases in which future things which would happen to people were foretold and afterwards fulfilled. Some of them were in the highest degree unlikely and unexpected. Osty's own view was that the more distant the future event the more sketchily the sensitive was able to see it; but the nearer in time, the more detailed the account. He gives an instance which happened to himself. An event in his own life was foretold twice. "Two years before its occurrence," he says, "the percipient expressed it thus: 'Oh! Peril of death after a while . . . perhaps an accident . . . but you will be saved, your life continues. . . .' Four months before: 'Take care, you will soon have a serious accident. . . . I hear a violent shock. . . . What luck! You will take no hurt! . . . I see a man bleeding on the ground; he is moaning, and all around him some things are strewn, I can't say what.'"

This latter prediction was made in March, 1911. On 15th August, 1911, Osty writes: "I was going at an easy pace in my car when a drunken baker, driving furiously, pulled the wrong rein and collided. The shock was such that the shaft, which struck the frame of the front glass, was shivered in pieces and one wheel mounted the bonnet and crushed it in. My friend, Th. Stenuit, who was with me, and I also were stricken with amazement at the suddenness of the accident and our good fortune at being unhurt. Turning round we saw the horse galloping off, the cart in the ditch, wheels uppermost, and the baker stretched moaning and bleeding in the middle of the road with a number of loaves scattered round him."

Predictions of this kind seem always to be the result of the sensitive's getting into touch with the subliminal portion

[1] *Traité de Métapsychique* (Alcan) 1922, pp. 509-10.

of *another* person's personality. It was a curious fact in Osty's experience that sensitives were not able to do the same thing with themselves or to foretell their own futures. The following abridged example shows the kind of performance which was typical of one of Osty's sensitives.

Osty received a letter enclosed by a certain Captain C., and was told only that the writer of the letter was now dead. On the 18th May, 1922, he gave this letter to Mme. Viviana, who crushed it in her hands and said that the writer was dead; a soldier; in the war; sunburnt; had a very direct gaze; was strong-willed and combative; unsentimental; intelligent; good; energetic; amiable; Catholic; had a tendency to Mysticism; would pray when sad or troubled; not bigoted; high-minded; came of a religious family and from a country where they give boats the names of saints, as in Brittany; had an elder brother in whom he placed confidence; his only anxiety was for a dearly-loved woman; there is a child; a feeling of swaying, rolling, of humidity and water . . . as if he were on the water; "my lips are salt as if I were on the sea"; an officer; young; died at the end of the war; not from a wound; suffocation; a sudden pain in the head; did not die in bed; small houses, soldiers, engineers, pickaxes, tents round him.

The points in the information are here condensed. Certainly the letter could not have given all this information even had it been read by the sensitive. Twenty-five of these points were found to be correct, and four were unverifiable. There was no false statement. The writer was Captain C.'s brother, and the letter had been written at sea in the transport *Ste. Anne* in a rough sea. Hence the feeling of swaying and rolling and of salt on the lips. The writer had been out at the war on the Balkan front, but was not killed in battle. He was reported to have died of influenza.

On 22nd May, 1922, Osty put the sister-in-law of the writer of the above letter in contact with another sensitive, Mme. Peyroutet, who was told nothing beforehand, and, on being introduced to the sister-in-law, was merely asked: "You will tell me to-day about a relation of this lady." She threw the white of an egg into a glass of water and said she saw a soldier and a widow, a son, a boy who had

been ill [correct]; soldier, sunburnt and with chestnut hair [correct]; not born in Paris, 'there was water, the sea'; his family pious; brought up by religious persons or priests [correct]; very religious family; many travels [correct]; rode well [in cavalry]; went over-seas; in a country beginning with M. [he was a long time in Macedonia]; died when he had just reached a town where there was much water [he died just after reaching Semendria on the Danube]; he died abroad; oh, what fever! . . . his head was affected . . . a congestion or something in the head; robbed after death [correct, robbed by Serbs]. Of the details given, thirty-seven were correct, and three unverifiable. No false statements were made. It can be seen even from this highly-condensed summary that the two accounts were in very fair agreement. One after another, and again and again, these sensitives described persons and events in the past, the present and the future with sufficient accuracy, as in the above case, to eliminate chance-coincidence or guessing. When we take into account the reliability of Dr. Osty as an investigator, the number of incidents and the variety of sensitives, the state of ignorance of the sensitive regarding the person concerned (the person was often introduced suddenly out of the blue) and the internal evidence of the character of the faculty, which is self-consistent throughout, we must surely, unless we are very prejudiced, admit that a paranormal explanation is the only one. An assessment of the evidence of each case should be made by referring to the case as Osty gives it in the book above named. It is impossible to compress an adequate examination of evidence.

The sensitives were by no means always correct; and their errors were instructive. They were not often affected by what people were *consciously* thinking or expecting; but they were affected by their *subconscious* wishes, hopes, expectations and ideas. Osty says: "Receptivity to voluntarily suggested thought is very rare indeed. Rather less rare is sensibility to thought not voluntarily suggested, but under the dominance of conscious attention. Much more frequently met with is impressionability to thought not suggested nor formulated nor consciously remembered, especially when it lies as if statically, in the reservoirs of

memory." One very instructive case occurred. A man was reported wounded and missing in the 1914–18 war, and his father, in the course of six years, visited nine different sensitives and had fifteen sittings. All gave substantially similar and true accounts of the man and the circumstances under which he was wounded, but the first two gave the father the impression that he might be alive and a prisoner of war. So strongly did this hope live in the father's mind that all but one of the sensitives supported it. In the end, however, the man turned out to have been killed. These sensitives, all but one, had reflected the father's own hope and returned it back to him. This strongly supports the view that the source of the sensitive's information is the mind of the person she is in contact with and not the event itself. Thus, if a person strongly believes that the fact is so and so, the sensitive may pick up the *belief* and offer it as a real event. Equally, the sensitive may pick up from that person's mind an experience of a real event, present, past or future. It is one more piece of evidence that a sensitive is open to various influences and is not always able to distinguish between them. We find this eclectic feature also in the construction of dreams. We should not assess the pronouncements of a sensitive on the "hit-and-miss" principle—right when they come off and wrong when they do not. That is a false way of looking at the problem, fostered by paying too much attention to telepathic experiments of the laboratory kind. The *whole* of a sensitive's pronouncement, right or wrong, is of psychological interest. It is not all due to one cause. When it contains telepathic or precognitive features we call these "paranormal" and tend to place them in a class apart. But this is to force an artificial distinction on the phenomena. We should regard a sensitive's experience as a signal to consciousness consisting of a theme built up of material from different sources.

Osty says very pertinently: "If we are to take the language of permanently metagnomic subjects literally, one might think . . . that they perceive realities as if by a paranormal, optical sense outside time and space, or that they grasp, from an ultra-material plane, enduring or anticipatory reflects of phenomena pertaining to individual lives. But

on every occasion that I have endeavoured to discover the mental representation from which the subjects draw their information, mental images, whether hallucinatory or not, were not exact reflects of reality but representations building up a fanciful language intended to bring the supernormal cognition into consciousness by all kinds of imaginative means. In the course of my study of metagnomic subjects I have never yet come across *veridical hallucinations*, i.e. those which are identical with an external reality. The visual images have always seemed to be reconstructions of ideas, of notions and of cognitions. If I have no warrant for denying the possibility of veridical hallucinations (understood as exact representations of reality) I am at least entitled in virtue of a long, active investigation to say that in practical research it is very rare, or at any rate only occurs with exceptional subjects." Osty is using the word "veridical" in a rather special sense. Usually it means corresponding with reality in the fairly loose sense of generally corresponding: Osty uses it to mean corresponding with photographic exactness.

His point is a very important one. It seems to be generally true in psychical research that what the sensitive perceives are *ad hoc* creations contrived by some portion of her own personality. That does not make her cognitive powers merely "subjective," for these creations are partly modelled on some independent reality. The principle of knowing a fact by means of a created and, to some extent, symbolical representation, is carried even into normal sense-perception; yet that does not prevent us from becoming aware of an independent world or convert us into solipsists.

In telepathy, the sensitive becomes consciously aware of a symbol, constructed by some subconscious factor of her personality, which *represents* the thought in the other person's mind. If the sensitive perceives, even, perhaps, with fair accuracy, some distant scene and the events taking place there (there are instances of this), no travelling through space is involved. Knowledge of the distant scene can be subconsciously acquired, most likely from the minds of those familiar with it, and a picture embodying the facts is *created* by a subconscious element of the sensitive's own personality. It is this created picture, and not the distant

place itself, that the sensitive becomes aware of. Similarly, in the case of precognition, if a sensitive acquires knowledge of a future event, her consciousness does not journey into the future. Some part of her subconsciousness personality becomes aware of the future event and transmits its knowlodge to consciousness by creating a representative picture of it. The mystery of all these happenings lies in the character of those subliminal portions of the personality which get hold of the fundamental knowledge. They must stand in a different kind of relation to the independent world from that occupied by normal consciousness.

The pictures which are created to represent subliminal knowledge do not always appear to aim at representing it literally. Symbolism is often used deliberately by Osty's sensitives, particularly in the diagnosis of illness. Because the sensitives have no anatomical knowledge, the descriptions are crudely symbolical. In one case, correctly diagnosed as early pregnancy, the ovary was described as being "like a bunch of grapes," and the blood "whitish as if it contained some humour." A lady was seen with a black hole in her right eye. There was really no black hole, but the sight had been destroyed by a small shot. Symbolism is sometimes carried even further, as when the fact that a certain person is intelligent is expressed by a figure with extraordinarily bright eyes and light radiating from the skull, etc.

Osty agrees with other workers in being convinced that there is nothing abnormal or pathological about the paranormal faculty. "The best output is obtained," he says, "when the percipient is morally quiet, in the best possible health and if the experiment is confined to those times when the subject feels most disposed to work." "Metagnomy," he adds, "does sometimes go with 'neuropathic somnambulism'; but when it does it passes away with the passage of the neuropathic conditions. Such is not the case with metagnomic subjects whose faculty is permanent."

Another important point is the extraordinary variety in which the faculty manifests itself in different individuals. "There are . . . percipients who take a panoramic view of individual lives," he says, "and those who go through them

with a lantern; and between these two groups there are all intermediate degrees."

A remarkable fact about Osty's sensitives is that none of them seems to have made any claim to be in contact with the dead. Their type of sensitivity made them cognisant of the contents of living minds.

Osty's work gives great insight into paranormal faculty. It shows that this faculty is capable of being scientifically investigated, provided the right methods are used. Methods must be flexible and adapted to circumstances: it is no good cramping the phenomena by forcing upon them the type of experimental method we are accustomed to use in physical science. Psychical research is much more prolific of "brute facts" than is physical science. It is crowded with individual differences and largely lacking in that uniformity which makes possible the enunciation of general laws. This should be kept steadily in view by investigators. Osty even goes so far as to make the following statement: "The attempt to work from the known to the unknown and from the simple to the complex as in ordinary science is but to create illusions and to lose time." Yet Osty did his work in the true spirit of science, which is not so common in the world as people imagine. "We are not concerned to imagine theories according to preconceived opinions and intellectual tendencies *but to let nature speak*," he says. This is the true spirit of science; but few are prepared to abide by it in this field. Osty, too, approached the subject with a fitting sense of our abysmal ignorance of the human being. "What is human personality?" he adds. "It is important that we should fully realise that we do not know. To be aware that we do not know is the best preparation for research."

21

SEÑORA Z

Effect of Holding an Object when under Hypnosis

THE influence of an object in assisting a sensitive to become aware of facts about its owner or about those who have touched it is well brought out by the case of Señora Z.[1]

She was a Mexican lady, her full name being Señora Maria Reyes de Z (the surname is not published). She was well educated and of good social standing, being a daughter of the Governor of the State of Michoacan. Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, who investigated the case of Patience Worth and was one of the ablest workers in psychical research on the American side of the Atlantic, travelled to Mexico in 1921 to investigate this sensitive. This fact greatly enhances the case's evidential value.

The lady was not interested in spiritualism but went to Dr. Pagenstecher, a German physician of high repute in Mexico City, to be treated for insomnia. He tried hypnosis and discovered that she entered a cataleptic state in which her hands became rigid, and that while in this state she could give accurate descriptions of the history of any object placed between her hands. If told to do so, she would answer questions about them afterwards when in the post-hypnotic state. Various objects were given her. Sometimes she would go back to the beginning and describe the scene of their manufacture; sometimes events in which they had played a part. A fragment of marble, for example, taken from a temple in the Roman Forum produced a recognisable description of the Forum as seen from a particular point of view, although she had not been told where the marble came from. Pumice stone, taken from the bed of Lake Texcoco, produced not only a description of its volcanic origin (perhaps obvious) but also a description of fishes swimming above it. Some of the information

[1]*Proceedings* of the American Society for Psychical Research, Vol. xv, pp. 189–314 and Vol. xvi.

given might have been telepathically acquired from the mind of Dr. Pagenstecher; but the canalising effect of the object was well-marked, and she was apparently unable to do anything without it.

Her outstanding achievement occurred when a piece of paper, which had been found in a bottle washed up on the Azores, was given to her to hold. The paper is stated to have been protected by five seals, which were examined and found intact after the sensitive's statement relating to the contents of the paper had been taken down. The paper contained the words: "The ship is sinking. Farewell my Luisa, see that my children do not forget me, your Ramon, Havana. May God care for you and me also. Farewell."

On account of the names on the paper, it finally reached a lady living in Havana who recognised on it her husband's writing. The latter was a political refugee, who had left without stating his destination and had last been heard of in New York. A realistic description of the personal appearance of the writer of the message, including a pronounced scar above the right eyebrow, was given by Señora Z; and this description was recognised by the widow in Havana. A description was also given of the sinking of a very large liner and of the man writing the message, corking it up in a bottle and throwing the bottle into the sea. As he was never heard of again and had been in New York about the time of the sailing of the *Lusitania* on her last voyage, it was concluded that he had been lost in that ship.

Señora Z made a number of remarkable statements concerning various objects given her to hold. Some of these experiments were witnessed by half a dozen prominent Mexicans and Americans and by a British banker, and the records of certain of these were entered in the minutes of the *Medical Society Pedro Escobedo* in Mexico City.

An extraordinary *rapport* is stated to have existed between the subject and Dr. Pagenstecher, in which every prick or sensation experienced by him was simultaneously experienced by her while she was in her hypnotic state. This case shows how much is yet to be learned from an examination of hypnotic states induced in specially-selected subjects.

VII

THE QUESTION OF INTERVENTION BY THE DEAD

22

DISCARNATE AGENCY?

More Evidence on the Discarnate Problem

WE have now examined briefly some of the material produced by different kinds of sensitives. All provide overwhelming evidence for telepathy, which no one has so far explained on any other hypothesis. But we found more than this. We found repeated claims that some of the material produced by sensitives proceeds from the dead. The claim in some cases turns out to be untenable; in other cases it is unacceptable in a direct and literal sense. But this by no means disposes of the possibility that the dead may be behind a good deal of the material produced by mediums and sensitives; for the process by which the material is produced is evidently both complex and subtle. There is every indication that the messages are multiply caused, and the mind of a deceased person may quite well be one causal factor in a product which is far from being a straightforward communication. The best material contains strong evidence in support of this claim, although it is true that all the evidence *can* be otherwise explained.

Having considered some of the general evidence for discarnate agency contained in automatic and mediumistic material, it will probably be best to round off this evidence by citing a few specially cogent cases of apparent discarnate knowledge.

The following examples were obtained in three different ways, the first through a medium, the second through a dream, and the third through automatic writing.

The Dark Note-book Case. On the 17th and 19th December, 1917, a lady, Mrs. Hugh Talbot, arranged for two sittings with the medium, Mrs. Osborne Leonard. She says: "Mrs. Leonard at this time knew neither my name nor address, nor had I ever been to her or any other medium before in my life."

Through the control, Feda, a very accurate description was given of the personal appearance of Mrs. Talbot's deceased husband. "All that he said, or rather Feda for him, was clear and lucid. Incidents of the past, known only to him and to me, were spoken of: belongings, trivial in themselves, but possessing for him a particular personal interest of which I was aware, were minutely and correctly described and I was asked if I still had them. All this," says Mrs. Talbot, "was very interesting and seemed very natural. Suddenly Feda began a tiresome description of a book, she said it was leather and dark, and tried to show me its size (about 8 to 10 inches long and 4 or 5 inches wide). Feda said: 'It is not exactly a *book*, it is not printed, Feda wouldn't call it a book, it had writing in.' It was long before I could connect this description with anything at all, but at last I remembered a red leather note-book of my husband's, which I think he called a log-book: and I asked: 'It is a log-book?' Feda seemed puzzled at this and not to know what a log-book was and repeated the word once or twice, then said: 'Yes, yes, he says it might be a log-book.' I then said: 'Is it a red book?' On this point there was hesitation. They thought possibly it was, though he thought it was darker. The answer was undecided, and Feda began a wearisome description all over again, adding that I was to look on page twelve, for something written (I am not sure of this word) there, that it would be so interesting after this conversation. Then she said: 'He is not sure it is page twelve, it might be thirteen, it is so long, but he does want you to look and to try to find it. It would interest him to know if this extract is there.'"

Mrs. Talbot was not very enthusiastic about the book, which she remembered having looked through at one time, wondering whether it was worth keeping. There were things in it about ships and her husband's work, but she

also remembered a few notes and verses. She was not sure whether she had thrown it away or whether it was stacked among some luggage, and she replied rather indefinitely that she would see if she could find it. This would not do for Feda, who started in about it again, saying: "There are two books, you will know the one he means by a diagram of languages in the front—Indo-European, Aryan, Semitic languages and others."

Mrs. Talbot rather reluctantly searched for the book, and right at the back of a top bookshelf found two old note-books of her husband's, one in shabby black leather of the size that had been indicated. Inside she was astonished to read: "Table of Semitic or Syro-Arabian languages." And on the other side: "General table of the Aryan and Indo-European languages." On page 13 was written the following:

> "I discovered by certain whispers which it was supposed I was unable to hear and from certain glances of curiosity or commiseration which it was supposed I was unable to see that I was near death. . . . Presently my mind began to dwell not only on happiness which was to come, but upon happiness that I was actually enjoying. I saw long-forgotten forms, playmates, schoolfellows, companions of my youth and of my old age, who one and all smiled upon me. They did not smile with any compassion, that I no longer felt that I needed, but with that sort of kindness which is exchanged by people who are equally happy. I saw my mother, father and sisters, all of whom I had survived. They did not speak, yet they communicated to me their unaltered and unalterable affection. At about the time when they appeared, I made an effort to realise my bodily situation . . . that is, I endeavoured to connect my soul with the body which lay on the bed in my house. . . . The endeavour failed. I was dead. . . ."[1]

Corroboration from members of Mrs. Talbot's family

[1] Extract from *Post Mortem*, author anon. Blackwood and Sons, 1881.

about the incident is appended to the account.[1] This then, was the "something written" which would be "so interesting after this conversation." And Mrs. Talbot would have been very unlikely to have found it but for the description of the note-book given by Feda.

The Fountain Pens Case. The percipient in this case, Miss I. Sollas, was personally known to Mrs. Salter, an officer of the Society for Psychical Research, and participant in the Cross-Correspondences (q.v.). The dream occurred and was noted down in May, 1937, and was described to the Society in a letter dated 14th January, 1938, as follows:

> "In this dream my father came holding out to me a handful of fountain pens. I could not understand what he wanted me to do with them. He went away to his room and came again bringing another handful and anxiously asking me to 'send them to the same address.' I awoke puzzled and began to remember that shortly before the end [Miss Sollas's father had died on 20th October, 1936] he had given me a parcel of silver paper saying it was the collection of a lifetime and would I take it for him to the hospital. Did I know the address? He said he would have taken it himself if he had known what address to take it to; was I sure I knew the address? It seemed to me very odd at the time because the hospital is a place everyone knows, including himself. Well, after some time, I was in his study and found a box with a label 'old fountain pens' containing a handful of them and thought this looked like something interesting. Later in another part of the room, I found another box similarly labelled and also containing a handful—corresponding to the two handfuls of my dream. I asked a friend if she knew whether old fountain pens were ever collected for charities, and she said Yes, she had once seen an advertisement asking for them.
>
> "My father was interested in the experiment made by —was it Myers—someone who left a document locked up

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxxi, p. 253.

for survivors to see if they could tell its contents after his death. I remember my father saying he should have thought some simpler device should have been thought of, and this seemed to me like his simpler version of that experiment."

In the dream, Miss Sollas's father went from his study to his bedroom to fetch the second handful of pens. Actually one box of pens was found in his study and the other "in the remotest corner of a drawer in his chest of drawers" at the other end, the bedroom end, of the room which her father had used for both study and bedroom. Miss Sollas admits that she might possibly have seen the box at the study-end of the room before she had her dream without noticing it; but she is sure she can never have seen the other box till she found it after the dream. Again, memory belonging to a deceased person is strongly suggested, though not conclusively proved.[1]

The "London" Case. The third case was obtained by myself through an introduction given me by a prominent member of the Society for Psychical Research to the principal witness. I am not allowed to disclose names, so have used pseudonyms. The daughter of the lady whom I will here call Mrs. Simpson, used to practise automatic writing, and the messages received often purported to come from a friend, D, who had been killed in the war of 1914–18. One evening in December, 1916, D said he wanted to introduce a man he had met since his death, who was miserable because, after doing some fine things in his life, he did a mean thing at the end. Then the character of the writing changed, and this man purported to communicate direct. The script proceeded as follows:

Fear led me to do a very evil thing. I cannot forgive myself. It is not what the world thought. I have missed my chance.

(What is your name?)

Whiteman. I was here many years ago.

(At B—— College?)

[1] *Journal* of the S.P.R., Vol. xxx, p. 182.

No, at X—— College. [The actual name of the college was given.]

(When did you die?)

I died about—so long ago I think about fifty years.

The communicator then stated that he had no grave.

(Did you die in battle?)

No, had I died fighting I should be happier now.

(Have you been unhappy for fifty years?)

No, but since I have seen so many splendid deaths I remember.

(What is your name?)

Whiteman. John Whiteman.

(What did you do?)

It did not succeed, but I would have saved myself at the expense of another. Intentions are everything—we neither of us escaped.

(Escaped what?)

Death.

(How did you meet D?)

In the field of battle I saw him die and since I have seen him help men to die.

(We tried to comfort him.)

Yes, that is what he tells me—to come and help, not to be stopped by things that were passed fifty years ago, but I stand by full of regret. I taught others. Myself I could not teach.

(Again we tried to cheer him.)

That is what he says.

(What was your work here?)

I taught the Word.

(A clergyman?)

Yes.

(Where was your work?)

The name has gone—it was very far away.

(Were you married?)

Alas!

(Can we do anything for you?)

I have only just begun to realise what I did. Help me by prayer—it is everything.

(Tell me where you died.)

[Written very faintly] L o n d o n.

This was very puzzling. If this man had died in London, how was it that he had no grave? Inquiries at X—— College brought to light from the college registry the facts that John Wightman [the difference in spelling between the two original names is rather less than the difference between "Whiteman" and "Wightman"] born in 1829, had matriculated there in 1847, aged 17; had taken Orders and had set out for Australia, but was lost in the S.S. *London*, which foundered in the Bay of Biscay on 11th January, 1866. This, it will be seen, was just fifty years before the date at which the script was written, namely December, 1916.

A work of reference shows that the Rev. John Wightman, identifiable from details given with the above, died unmarried in 1866.

Reference to the back numbers of *The Times* brought to light accounts of the wreck of the *London* in the issues of the 17th, 18th and 19th January, 1866. It was a tragic disaster. The passengers were told by the captain some time before the ship sank that there was no hope for them and there were distressing scenes. The ship carried 270 passengers and there were only 19 survivors. The name John Whiteman (spelt as in the script) occurs in the second-class passenger list. The automatist had never heard of the wreck of the *London*, though Mrs. Simpson had a faint recollection that she had heard of it in her girlhood.

There can, of course, from the nature of the case be no proof that John Whiteman tried to save himself at the expense of another; but it is certain that he met his death under circumstances which might lead to a temptation to do such a thing.[1]

There are other cases which point, like these three, to the memory of a deceased communicator as the source of the information, though none of them rigidly prove it.

Certain cases of a different type are interesting and

[1] *Journal* of the S.P.R., Vol. xxxi, p. 90.

suggestive from another point of view, and may be appropriately noticed here. They show that consciousness can continue when the body and brain are very far from being in a normal condition and suggest (though again they do not rigidly prove) that consciousness is not a resultant of the normally functioning brain but is only conditioned and canalised by it. In particular, some of these cases indicate a very important fact, namely, that under certain psycho-physical conditions there is not only a separation of the self from the body but also a division occurring in the personality itself. The latter point was well illustrated in the case of Mrs. Willett's experience described on pp. 159–60.

An interesting variant of this was described by a lady well known to me in whose accuracy I have complete confidence. The account is in her own words, and the experience took place in August, 1921. "I was lying in bed cogitating about doing something extremely agreeable but entirely selfish. I was suddenly aware of being in two places at once. One 'me' was still lying in bed looking as I normally do. The other 'me' was standing at the foot of the bed, very still, very straight, dressed in white with a Madonna-like veil over the head. I was aware of the extreme whiteness of the clothes. We then had a spirited discussion. The white 'me' said: 'You know that you will not do this.' The 'me' in bed flung itself about in exasperation at the impassive authority of the white 'me' and said: 'I shall do what I like, you pious, white prig.' I was definitely both 'me's' and conscious in both places simultaneously. There was no sense of a third 'me' linking the two. Each 'me' could see the other, with its expected exterior surroundings all the time. The white 'me' felt sympathy, but contempt for the other 'me.' I may say that the white 'me' won. I have no memory of the process of coalescing; merely at a given moment both 'mes' were observing the exterior world from the same place."

One point of interest here is that the personality divided on a Jekyll-and-Hyde principle. But what is of still greater interest is that the two divided portions *were both* simultaneously the percipient. The two figures were merely

dream-imagery seen from without, and each was seen as though the centre of perception was in the other. In some cases, one only of the two divided portions appears to the percipient to be the real self.

The following is another case. It was copied by Mr. Norman F. Ellison from a diary which he kept during the war of 1914–18. "We left Monchiet in the early afternoon, and after a gruelling march along a *pavé* road, slippery with mud and melted snow, reached Beaumetz at night. The briefest halt, and then on to Wailly, immediately behind the line some eight miles south of Arras. From there we waded through a winding communication trench a mile long but seemingly interminable. Liquid mud to the knees and a bitterly cold sleet numbing us through. At last we reached the front line and took over from the French—a territorial reserve battalion. The worst trenches we had ever been in. No repairs had been done to them for months and months. At worst they collapsed inwards and did not give head shelter; at best they were a trough of liquid muck. H. and I in the same traverse and straight away on sentry duty. We were both too utterly fed up to even curse. Bodily exhausted, sodden and chilled to the bone with sleet; hungry and without rations or the means of lighting a fire to boil a dixey of water; not a dry square inch to sit upon, let alone a square foot of shelter beneath which to have the solace of a pipe, we agreed that this was the worst night of concentrated physical discomfort we had come across hitherto—and neither of us were strangers to discomfort.

"Several hours of this misery passed and then an amazing change came over me. I became conscious, acutely conscious that I was outside myself; that the real 'me'—the ego, spirit or what you like—was entirely separate and outside my fleshly body. I was looking in a wholly detached and impersonal way upon the discomforts of a khaki-clad body, which, whilst I realised that it was my own, might easily have belonged to someone else for all the direct connection I seemed to have with it. I knew that my body must be feeling acutely cold and miserable but I, my spirit part, felt nothing." His companion told him that his grim silence had suddenly given place to wit and humour and

he had chatted as unconcernedly as if before a comfortable fire. "Nothing will shake my inward belief," he concludes, "and knowledge that on this particular night my soul and body were entirely separated from each other."[1]

Although the narrator speaks of a separation of soul from body and talks about being outside his *body*, it is clear that this, like Mrs. Willett's case, was an example of "splitting" of the personality. For it cannot have been his body alone which chatted humorously and unconcernedly while he was unaware of it. His personality must have divided.

Again, we may compare this with an interesting case cited by Sir Auckland Geddes in an address delivered to the Royal Medical Society on 26th February, 1927, and entitled by him *A Voice from the Grandstand.* The title is chosen merely because, in addressing the medical profession, Sir Auckland Geddes said that he felt like a critic of an International Rugby Match sitting in the grandstand on the strength of having, in years gone by, been a member of the school third fifteen.

The case, he says, is "the experience of a man who passed into the very portals of death and was brought back to life by medical treatment." "The record was taken down in shorthand by a skilled secretary as life was re-establishing itself." The account is here abridged.

"On Saturday, 9th November, a few minutes after midnight, I began to feel very ill and by two o'clock was definitely suffering from acute gastro-enteritis, which kept me vomiting and purging until about eight o'clock. . . . By ten o'clock I had developed all the symptoms of very acute poisoning; intense gastro-intestinal pain, diarrhœa; pulse and respirations became quite impossible to count, I wanted to ring for assistance, but found I could not, and so quite placidly gave up the attempt. I realised I was very ill and very quickly reviewed my whole financial position. Thereafter at no time did my consciousness appear to me to be in any way dimmed, but I suddenly realised that *my* consciousness was separating from another consciousness which was also me. These, for purposes of

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xxv, p. 126.

description, we could call the A- and B-consciousnesses, and throughout what follows the ego attached itself to the A-consciousness. The B-personality I recognised as belonging to the body, and as my physical condition grew worse and the heart was fibrillating rather than beating, I realised that the B-consciousness belonging to the body was beginning to show signs of being composite, that is built up of 'consciousness' from the head, the heart and the viscera. These components became more individual and the B-consciousness began to disintegrate, while the A-consciousness, which was now me, seemed to be altogether outside my body, which it could see. Gradually I realised that I could see, not only my body and the bed in which it was, but everything in the whole house and garden, and then I realised that I was seeing, not only 'things' at home but in London and in Scotland, in fact wherever my attention was directed, it seemed to me; and the explanation which I received, from what source I do not know, but which I found myself calling to myself my mentor, was that I was free in a time-dimension of space, wherein 'now' was in some way equivalent to 'here' in the ordinary three-dimensional space of everyday life."

The narrator then says that his further experiences can only be described metaphorically, for, although he seemed to have two-eyed vision, he "appreciated" rather than "saw" things. He began to recognise people he knew and they seemed to be characterised by coloured condensations around them. "Just as I began to grasp all these," he continues, "I saw 'A' enter my bedroom; I realised she got a terrible shock and I saw her hurry to the telephone. I saw my doctor leave his patients and come very quickly, and heard him say, or saw him think, 'He is nearly gone.' I heard him quite clearly speaking to me on the bed, but I was not in touch with my body and could not answer him. I was really cross when he took a syringe and rapidly injected my body with something which I afterwards learned was camphor. As the heart began to beat more strongly, I was drawn back, and I was intensely annoyed, because I was so interested and just beginning to understand where I was and what I was 'seeing.' I came back into the body really angry at being pulled back, and once

I was back, all the clarity of vision of anything and everything disappeared and I was just possessed of a glimmer of consciousness, which was suffused with pain."

The narrator adds that this experience showed no tendency to fade like a dream and no tendency to grow or to rationalise itself. Neither did it ever return after he was restored to life. Sir Auckland Geddes says: "What are we to make of it? Of one thing only can we be quite sure. It is not a fake. Without certainty of this, I should not have brought it to your notice."

One cannot help being struck by the similarity between Mrs. Willett's Mind No. 2 and Mind No. 1 and this narrator's A-personality and B-personality. But what I think we ought chiefly to learn is that *selfhood has not the kind of unity which we associate with numerical separateness.* What selfhood *is*—on what characteristics it depends—is probably beyond the capacity of our minds to grasp. But at least we can learn from such cases to avoid dogmatic statements, inadequate theories and hasty conclusions.

These out-of-the-body cases are of exceptional interest. It is worth pointing out that in two such cases recorded by the Society for Psychical Research, quite disconnected from one another and occurring in different countries (they are too long to quote here) the percipients describe the process of getting out of their bodies in almost identical terms. One said: "As I emerged from the head I floated up and down and laterally like a soap-bubble attached to the bowl of a pipe." The other said that he thought to himself: ". . . here I am, ball of air in the air, a captive balloon still attached to the earth by a kind of elastic string. . . ."

Finally, a case was recorded by Sir Alexander Ogston, K.C.V.O., as having occurred to himself during the South African War. He had been admitted to the Bloemfontein Hospital suffering from typhoid fever. "In my delirium," he says, "night and day made little difference to me. In the four-bedded ward where they first placed me, I lay, as it seemed, in a constant stupor, which excluded the existence of any hopes or fears. Mind and body seemed to be dual, and to some extent separate. I was conscious of the body as an inert, tumbled mass near the door; it belonged to me

but it was not I. I was conscious that my mental self used regularly to leave the body always carrying something soft and black, I did not know what, in my left hand—that was invariable—and wandered away from it under grey, sunless, moonless, starless skies, ever onwards to a distant gleam on the horizon, solitary but not unhappy, and seeing other dark shades gliding silently by until something produced a consciousness that the chilly mass which I then recalled was my body, was being stirred as it lay by the door. I was then drawn rapidly back to it, joined it with disgust, and it became I and was fed, spoken to and cared for. When it was again left I seemed to wander off as before by the side of a dark, slowly-flowing, great flood through silent fields of asphodel, knowing neither light nor darkness, and though I knew that death was hovering about, having no thought of religion nor dread of the end, and roamed on beneath the murky skies apathetic and contented, until something again disturbed the body where it lay, when I was drawn back to it afresh and entered it with ever-growing repulsion. As the days went on, or rather I should say as time passed, all I knew of my sickness was that the wanderings through the dim, asphodel fields became more continual and more distinct, until about the end of the term of high fever I was summoned back to the huddled mass with intense loathing, and as I drew near and heard someone say: 'He will live,' I remember finding the mass less cold and clammy, and ever after that the wanderings appeared to be fewer and shorter, the thing lying at the door and I grew more together, and ceased to be two separate entities.

"In my wanderings there was a strange consciousness that I could see through the walls of the building, though I was aware that they were there and that everything was transparent to my senses. I saw plainly, for instance, a poor R.A.M.C. surgeon, of whose existence I had not known, and who was in quite another part of the hospital, grow very ill and scream and die. I saw them cover over his corpse and carry him softly out on shoeless feet, quietly and surreptitiously, lest we should know that he had died, and the next night, I thought, take him away to the cemetery. Afterwards when I told these happenings

to the sisters, they informed me that all this had happened. . . ."[1]

Perhaps we have not a sufficient number of well-authenticated cases of this kind from which to generalise; but to any thoughtful person, who does not reject evidence for the paranormal on principle, they must be very suggestive. When the bodily vitality is lowered beyond a certain point (starvation is said to produce a similar effect), extrasensory perception of the surroundings seems to occur. Also consciousness becomes very lucid and clear. Why, on the epiphenomenalist view, does this happen? Why, when the body is nearly dead, and the brain has almost ceased to function, is consciousness bright and clear; and why, as soon as the brain begins to function again, is it reduced to a sluggish glimmer?

More cases of this kind need to be properly recorded; but the evidence we have is sufficient to show how far we are from understanding our personalities.

[1] *Reminiscences of Three Campaigns, Part II, South African War*, Chapter xvi, pp. 222–3.

23

ALTERNATIVES TO DISCARNATE AGENCY

What the Rejection of the Discarnate Theory Implies

THE evidence we have considered which most strongly suggests discarnate agency is contained in the case of Patience Worth, the Cross-correspondences, the Automatic Writing of Mrs. Willett, certain examples of Control-Mediumship, and the *Dark Note-book*, *Fountain Pens* and *London* cases. It is not easy, perhaps it is impossible, to find or even to suggest evidence which would settle the question of discarnate agency out of hand. The limits of telepathy, and of extra-sensory faculty in general, are unknown; consequently it is always possible to suggest an alternative hypothesis to the agency of the dead, although such hypotheses are largely based on drafts on our ignorance.

We found in Chapter 6 evidence of a broad principle, which seems to underlie most paranormal phenomena, that events taking place in the subliminal region of the self are not made known to consciousness directly but are *mediated* to it by means of some constructed symbol or vehicle. In the case of apparent communications from the dead, this principle still seems to hold. The general contempt for mediumistic and automatic communications arises, at least in part, from a failure to grasp their nature. People seize upon some poor type of mediumistic communication and, taking it quite naïvely, say: "If this is how the dead speak, they must have become imbeciles." But the "message" is, in fact, not so much a message as a dramatic construct, probably of multiple origin. To regard it as on a par with a telephone message sent by one human being to another is to misunderstand the whole situation.

But what about the communicator *as he appears to the sitter*? Mrs. Sidgwick pointed out, in her analysis of the Piper case, that "the characterisation of even genuine communicators, with the whole dramatic machinery em-

ployed, is probably merely dream-like." But the better the conditions, the clearer and more life-like does the communicator become.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that none of these messages proceed from the dead: how can we then explain them? We have to admit, not merely telepathy in the sense of thought-transference, but something much more comprehensive. As far as I am aware, no one who is at all conversant with the evidence denies this. It is highly desirable that anyone who does deny it should say definitely how he explains this evidence without postulating a faculty so puissant and comprehensive as to deserve the name of super-telepathy.

To explain the phenomena discussed in Chapters 16 to 19 without postulating discarnate agency, we must assume two things: (1) a power possessed by the subliminal self of gathering any information it requires from any living mind which possesses it; (2) a power to construct dramatic personalities out of the information so acquired.

The case of Patience Worth might be explained in this way. We could say that the subliminal self of Mrs. Curran collected all the information it wanted about foreign lands, historical facts, linguistic peculiarities, dialects, etc., from the minds of various historians and scholars, or possibly even from the pages of printed books in libraries, and wove it into stories; also that it had a power of creating dramatic characters far exceeding anything that the conscious Mrs. Curran possessed. This is sufficiently startling; but when we come to the cross-correspondences, we have to admit more than this. The subliminal selves of all the automatists there concerned must have got together and, in subliminal committee-meetings, have worked out the plans for the various cross-correspondences. The classical knowledge must have been supplied by the subliminal self of Mrs. Verrall, and the distribution of the parts agreed upon by all. The vivid communicators, $Gurney_W$, $Myers_W$ and so on, must have been *constructed* out of information gathered about their characters, either from Mrs. Verrall, or from others who had known them in life. When Mrs. Verrall died in 1912, this did not prevent the communicators from continuing to appear, so that some re-shuffle of the

subliminal committee must be presumed to have taken place.

Let us assume that, so far as the acquisition of knowledge was concerned, the resources of a super-telepathy were equal to it. This is a vast admission. We are not concerned with the conveyance of simple ideas from the mind of A to the mind of B—the kind of thing which used to be called "thought-transference": we are assuming that all kinds of facts, even of the most recondite and speculative nature, once known to a person who is now dead, can be picked up from the minds of those who knew that person in the past through devious telepathic channels. Even small personal characteristics, such as a typical sense of humour, habitual caution, a sudden access of impatience, a characteristic turn of phrase, can be picked up in this way and exactly reproduced. Suppose we admit all this: we are then faced with a much greater difficulty. This information is not given out *as* information. It is supplied in dramatic form as the characteristics of extremely life-like communicators. Myers_W, Gurney_W, Sidgwick_W, etc., are, on this view, personalities *constructed* in the automatist's subliminal self. They are, for the time being, centres of consciousness endowed with the knowledge, the memories and other characteristics appropriate to the deceased persons they represent. These centres of consciousness may be inherent in the automatist's personality and not existing independently of her; but, for all that, they do have a genuine, if temporary, existence. We are faced by this extraordinary situation. If, say, Gurney_W has all the knowledge, the memories and mental and moral characteristics of the original Gurney, and, moreover, believes himself to *be* the original Gurney, even though he is no more than a phase of the automatist's personality, shall we not have to admit that he *is*, nevertheless, temporarily the real Gurney? On what grounds can we draw a distinction between an imitation Gurney, who possesses all Gurney's original qualities, and a temporary recall to being of the real Gurney? The two would amount to the same thing. Our "telepathic" view of the communicators would resolve itself into the statement that the subliminal self of an automatist can actually *create* real and living human beings,

who are, in fact, former human beings come to life again for a short time. This appears to be the alternative to the view that the real Gurney and Myers, etc., are communicating. It seems possible to hold this view, since we do not know the limits of the power of the subliminal self; but surely it is the more staggering hypothesis of the two. It credits the subliminal self with such immeasurable powers that the question of survival reappears in another form. Why should a being endowed with such powers be mortal? Does such an admission square with the reasons usually put forward for the view that the human being is mortal? And how are these powers correlated with physiological processes in the brain? One of the chief grounds of objection to survival is the view that all conscious and mental processes are exactly correlated with nervous processes. An epiphenomenalist who sets out to explain the cross-correspondences has surely a good deal of explaining to do.

It comes to this. The phenomena of psychical research (properly so-called) point strongly towards communications from the dead. It is possible to escape from this conclusion, but only at the expense of introducing a still more extravagant hypothesis. The facts are quite clear. They cannot be got rid of by maintaining a masterly silence, by looking in the opposite direction or by making false statements about them. Sooner or later they will have to be faced. Those who wish to know the truth about the nature of the human individual might as well face them now.

Two other hypotheses concerning these phenomena may be briefly referred to. Professor C. D. Broad has suggested the view that mind, as we know it, may be a compound of two factors, neither of which separately has the properties of mind. One is a "bodily factor," the other a "psychic factor." This "psychic factor," he suggests, may persist after death and become a temporary mind again when it unites with the "bodily factor of a medium."[1]

Another view, which is commonly advanced by the Catholic Church, is that mediumistic communicators are impersonations contrived by the Devil or by satanic

[1] *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, p. 538.

agency, or possibly by other types of non-human beings, such as "Demons." The following passage occurs, I believe, in Cardinal Newman's *Apologia*: "Also besides the hosts of evil spirits I considered there is a middle race, neither in heaven nor in hell, partially fallen, capricious, wayward, noble or crafty, benevolent or malicious as the case might be."

It seems to me that both these hypotheses need to be worked out in greater detail with respect to the evidence. Could the "psychic factor" in Professor Broad's hypothesis form such a perfect Gurney-communicator by uniting itself with Mrs. Willett's "bodily factor," while Mrs. Willett herself is still united with the same "bodily factor" and remains *conscious of her identity?*

The demonic view is, in any case, inconsistent with the philosophy of materialism. Space is lacking in which to discuss these views further. The point is that the evidence raises an acute problem for the scientific interpretation of psychological facts, and for philosophy. It cannot be lightly dismissed except at the cost of abandoning the principle of unbiassed appeal to fact.

VIII

PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

24

POLTERGEISTS

Is there any Truth in Poltergeist Stories?

THERE is a popular idea that psychical research is mainly, if not entirely, concerned with the physical phenomena of the séance-room, which consists of raps, lights, "materialisations," tinkling bells, toy trumpets sounding in cabinets and so forth. As a matter of fact these dubious phenomena, the delight of the conjurer and the stock-in-trade of the charlatan, are of subsidiary importance in psychical research. Telepathy, precognition, automatic writing and all the phenomena we have touched upon above (sometimes called "mental phenomena") have a much more direct bearing on the problem which psychical research has set itself to investigate, the nature of human personality, than have these physical phenomena. But the sensational experience of sitting in the dark, waiting for strange things to happen, has captured public attention and has created an unpleasant trade in fraud. This unsavoury mixture of fraud and sensation is so closely connected in the public mind with psychical research as to be almost identified with it.

Not long ago, this fact was accidentally brought home to me. On the 11th July, 1944, I happened to turn on the wireless. The "Brains Trust" was in progress, and a question was announced. The question was: "What is the attitude of scientists to psychical research?" Two scientists (Professor E. N. da C. Andrade and Dr. C. H. Waddington) and one philosopher (Dr. C. E. M. Joad) essayed to answer this question. All three immediately began to speak of the *physical* phenomena of the seance-room, which they

appeared to assume were what the questioner meant by "psychical research." The question-master summed up their remarks by saying that the case for psychical research amounts to a "charitable perhaps." This incident showed vividly that "psychical research," in the general mind, consists in the question of whether or not certain obscure physical phenomena take place in the presence of mediums. The conception of psychical research as revealing, through its mental phenomena, something of the hidden nature of the human being, scarcely exists. All the evidence for the mental phenomena, discussed above, which mainly constitute "psychical research," was dismissed as amounting to no more than a "charitable perhaps"!

The alleged physical phenomena may be conveniently divided into two heads: (1) poltergeists, and (2) the physical phenomena of the séance-room. The poltergeist, or "boisterous spirit," has a long history behind it. Stories of poltergeists, too, are very true to type. Their activities are singularly uniform and consist mainly in throwing objects about.

Everyone has heard of the Drummer of Tedworth (1661–3), which was reported on by the Rev. Joseph Glanville, one of the early Fellows of the Royal Society, quite in the spirit of psychical research. He points out that it is strange, if Mompesson is not telling the truth, because "he suffered in his name, his estate and in all his affairs and in the general peace of his family. Unbelievers took him for an impostor, others thought it was a judgment of God upon him for impiety. He suffered also in the loss of servants and the health and constant affrights of his whole household." He had certainly no reason to invent a poltergeist: but these phenomena, whatever they are, seem to appear uninvited.

The Epworth case, in which Wesley was involved, is also well known (1716–7). It is of the same type. Andrew Lang was struck with the uniformity of all these cases. He said: "Here, speaking as an anthropological amateur, I would again remark on the *uniformity* of the phenomena from the Eskimo (Rink) to my Red Indian case, in Hudson Bay Company territory, to D. D. Home, or to the most ignorant little country girl, or to very early missionary reports from

newly-conquered Peru, or to Mr. Denny's Chinese cases, or those of Catholic missionaries in Cochin China; it is always the old story of Epworth, Tedworth, Amhurst, Rerrick and so forth. The thing is 'universally human.' Why? Is there a traditional trick; a common hallucination (as Coleridge thought) or are we still to seek for a theory?"[1]

Several well-observed poltergeist cases offer points of interest and it is difficult to choose examples. Here are two perfectly independent cases which occurred in different countries, yet manifesting just the same features. To see the parallelism fully, the original accounts should be studied.

The first of these poltergeists selected a blacksmith's shop in Vienna for its escapades. It was investigated there in 1906 by a reliable observer, an Austrian member of the Society for Psychical Research, whom we will call Mr. Wienstadt. This gentleman found the blacksmith much disturbed because tools, bits of iron, screws, his pipe and so on were flung about the place. When interviewed by the investigator, he was wearing a stiff hat for protection and had a lump on the back of his head where a piece of iron had hit him. One of his two apprentices (aged fifteen and eighteen) [there are not infrequently adolescents in these cases] had a red spot on his cheek similarly caused. On his next visit, Mr. Wienstadt found that all the tools had been removed into boxes and placed outside the shop because a heavy hammer had several times whirled past the blacksmith's head. On his third visit he found a policeman and several newspaper reporters, while the blacksmith, outside his shop, not daring to go in, railed at the authorities for allowing such impossible things to happen. It appeared that two petroleum lamps had been smashed during the night and seven window-panes broken. During the afternoon, Mr. Wienstadt remained to observe and saw or felt thirty objects being thrown about; but he adds the comment: "I never saw any of the objects actually fly; with most of them I heard only the fall, with some I heard a slight noise indicating the direction from which they came. Some dropped quite close to me, three struck me on the head.

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xvii. p. 323.

"The first phenomenon that I witnessed there was a piece of iron about the size of a walnut touching me *quite lightly* on the top of my felt hat, and from there dropping on to the floor; I didn't know at first what it was that had touched me. The middle (top) part of my hat was folded in, almost touching the top of my head. The piece of iron must have *jumped* out again as otherwise it could not have fallen on to the ground. [It weighed 2½ ounces.]

"Later on I was struck by a small blade of steel on the back of the neck, and the third time by a fragment of a clay pipe; this and some other small pieces which flew about I had deposited on a wooden shelf on the wall where they were well out of the reach of the boys' ordinary manipulation. There were several people present, watching through the window and standing in the doorway, but I do not think any of them can be connected with the phenomena. The more people came the scarcer they grew.

"The last happened at about 4.30. The smith had gone out of the shop soon after the 'spook' began, lamenting his fate and finding evidently some consolation in the curiosity of the neighbours to hear the latest developments. I stood most of the time in the middle of the shop, keeping my eyes on the boys, my back turned to the smithy. About 4.30 I watched the boys drilling a hole in a piece of iron, their hands and evidently their attention being fullyoccupied. Suddenly the younger of the two screamed out and was nearly bent double with pain and fright while an iron measuring instrument flew on to the floor; it had struck him pretty sharply on the left temple, causing a swelling and a drop of blood. I had noticed the instrument a little time before lying on the work-bench about a yard behind the boy.

"The objects that flew about in my presence were mostly light, their weight never exceeding about a quarter of a pound. I have read up most of the cases in your *Proceedings*, and do not think I was in any way careless in my observations."

Mr. Wienstadt also says that as he sat in the smithy with no one at all between his right hand and the wall, a piece of iron struck him coming from the unoccupied end of the room. He also describes an incident with a small

picture of a church, about 6 by 4 inches, which had been sprinkled with holy water and which some of the bystanders expected would be left alone on account of its holy character. "I leant casually on the bench," he says, "with my back to the wall, about a yard from the picture, and, as stated above, saw after a few minutes the picture *fluttering* to the middle of the shop in an almost parabolic direction. It did not *fall*, but behaved rather like a sheet of paper; it did not break on the floor. As a rule the objects, however, seemed to be *thrown* with considerable violence. . . ."[1]

The phenomena lasted about two months. Then a story appeared in one of the papers saying that the matter had been cleared up; the boys had been caught red-handed by the police and had owned up to being the cause of the whole disturbance. They had been sent away and nothing more had happened. Next day, one of the boys came to Mr. Wienstadt, asking for his help, and saying that he had never done anything wrong, denying that he had owned up to anything except that he, with his comrade, had once, *after* working hours, tried whether they could reproduce the phenomena. The case came into court, and the boys were dismissed with a slight fine.

Mr. Wienstadt gave detailed answers to questions which were asked him. He also sent for inspection the piece of iron which had "felt like the lightest touch from a finger-tip" on his hat.

The fact that boys are present when things are thrown about of course raises suspicion. In this case the disturbances stopped when the boys were sent away, which increases the suspicion. But one should not jump too readily to the obvious conclusion before studying a number of cases.

Here is another one which compares interestingly with the above. It was investigated by Sir William Barrett, F.R.S. In the following abridgement, fictitious names have been substituted for the real ones.

In the autumn of 1917, Mr. Jordan, of Weston Manor, on the outskirts of Easton, had a dug-out built in his garden as a refuge from air-raids. The dug-out, besides

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xiii, pp. 69–72.

being below ground, was excavated into a small hill. The builder employed on the work complained almost daily that sand and stones hit him while he was at work, but no one paid much attention. One day the owner of the house, Mr. Jordan himself, visited the dug-out while the builder and his assistant, a boy of sixteen, were away at dinner. He descended the steps into it and was emphatic that he was quite alone. After inspecting the work, he turned to leave. "I closed the door at the bottom of the steps," he says, "and before taking my hand from the latch a stone came violently into contact with the inside of the door, and immediately afterwards three others in quick succession. I was somewhat startled, and did not move for a few seconds. I then cautiously proceeded to push the door open. Immediately another stone struck the door violently so that I again closed it. In quick succession from seven to ten stones struck the wall adjacent to the door, and also the door itself, and after waiting probably half a minute to a minute, one single stone hit the door. I waited probably a minute and then cautiously pushed the door open and found the stones I had heard deposited immediately behind the door. As I pushed the door open the stones had to be pushed along the ground at the back of the door. I went into the dug-out again and satisfied myself that no person was near." He adds that the stones varied in size from that of an orange to double the size.

The builder said that spurts of sand would come from nowhere and put out the candles by the light of which he was working. Then stones would begin to fly about which would hit him but not the boy. The builder was bruised and often his head was cut and bleeding. He suspected the boy and said he had caught him once or twice throwing sand. Then the candles were protected by being enclosed in glass jars, and the builder remarked to the boy: 'Now we've done them all right.' Instantly the jars were both knocked off by two stones which came from nowhere apparently. He said the two stones came together and not one after the other. "On Monday," the builder proceeded, "I was standing in the dug-out with my head close to the ceiling and felt something like some dirt come on my

head. I asked the boy what was on my head, at the same time putting up my hand to brush it away, and he roared with laughter as he said a brick was hovering there. As my hand got near it it fell down and dropped on the ground near my feet. The brick must have come up off the ground, as there were no bricks anywhere else. The brick weighed about ten pounds."

This was written by the builder in a signed statement. A later witness considered that the builder's account of the events was exaggerated; but one may note the extraordinary parallel between this incident and the piece of iron which hovered on Mr. Wienstadt's hat.

The engineer in charge of the local electric power station was called in by the builder because the latter had a vague idea that electricity might have something to do with it. The engineer gives a full account of what he experienced with a plan of the dug-out. He says a heavy stone hit the builder when the boy was some distance away. On one occasion the boy himself was struck by a stone. A Canadian soldier stationed near by testified in a sworn statement to having witnessed many of these phenomena, including spurts of sand, which, he said, came at an angle from the direction of the ceiling towards the candle and looked "as if it was shot from a pea-shooter." A local tailor was another witness. He began by taking a high hand with the boy, whom he accused of being responsible for everything, and told him that there was to be no more nonsense. Afterwards, in the dug-out, he received a handful of sand in his face and caught the boy in the act of throwing it, which, to him, was proof positive of the boy's complete guilt!

The press took the view that the story was "bunkum"; while a few were inclined to think that it might be the work of German spies who were tunnelling under England! There seems to be no doubt that stones and sand did fly about, for the bricks in the dug-out were chipped. We have the owner's evidence that they did so while the builder and the boy were not there. Finally a petroleum expert arrived and set the whole matter at rest (at least to his own satisfaction) by declaring that it was all due to an evolution of natural gas. Natural gas, he said, had been discovered

not many miles away and could account for all the phenomena which could reasonably be believed. The rest could be put down to exaggeration on the part of the witnesses. The gas, he thought, would be methane. He said he detected traces of inflammable gas at the top of the alcove, though he admitted that he had obtained no conclusive proof of the presence of methane. He said: "The discharge of comparatively small quantities of gas would probably be quite sufficient to cause most of the phenomena described, but it is more probable that slight explosions, not necessarily accompanied by any loud sounds or well-marked flame, may have taken place also." Only the front internal wall of the dug-out was lined with brick; the back consisted of alternate layers of stone and sand. "Pieces of the hard band," he says, "were projected violently, sometimes striking the brick wall and making distinct abrasions."

It is usually wise to accept the views of a specialist on his own subject; but one feels that one would like to ask this expert some further questions. If the pressure of gas in the wall was high enough to project stones across the dug-out with sufficient force to mark the brick wall opposite, how was it that the gas did not come out through the sand and fill the dug-out? Surely it must have done so; yet neither the builder nor the boy nor anyone else ever complained of gas. Indeed, they worked by candle-light, and if the dug-out had been full of inflammable gas, they could hardly have escaped a serious explosion. Perhaps the petroleum expert felt the force of this difficulty when he added that there might have been slight explosions not necessarily accompanied by any loud sounds or well-marked flame. But slight explosions where? Presumably in pockets in the sandy wall behind the stones that were shot out. But could explosions of gas shoot stones the size of an orange violently across the dug-out without making any noise or showing any flame? It seems incredible. Also, would not such explosions have brought down the sandy wall of the dug-out? Again, how did the gas behind the stones become ignited? Candles well in front of the wall could scarcely ignite the gas in pockets behind the stones. Again, all the witnesses, including the

petroleum expert himself, agreed that most of the stones came from the sandy back wall of the dug-out. Reference to the plan given shows that stones from this back wall, in order to strike the door, as Mr. Jordan said they did, must have got round a double right-angle bend. The natural-gas theory, therefore, leaves a good many pertinent questions unanswered. The boy evidently threw sand and may have thrown stones on occasion; but he cannot have done so when he was not there, and if the phenomena *were* genuine, any normal boy would try to imitate them.[1]

The frequency with which poltergeist phenomena are associated with the presence of adolescents has already been mentioned. This has led to a strong suspicion that they are due to trickery on the part of abnormal or mischievous children or young persons. But there are many instances in which it is difficult to see how such trickery could have been accomplished.

There is a case of particular interest in this respect, which I am not at liberty to quote, but to which I may make a general reference by way of illustration. The phenomena centred round a girl of fourteen, who was passing through a period of nervous instability. She was the daughter of highly educated and intelligent parents, who tested, with the assistance of others, every conceivable normal cause for the phenomena. As the girl lay in bed, with her mother sitting beside her holding her hand, the girl quite still and apparently asleep, the bed vibrated strongly and emitted a curious, clicking sound. Other unaccountable sounds occurred in the neighbourhood of the girl, who was frightened by these things and seemed to be quite unconscious that she was in any way the cause of them. This case strongly suggests some causal connection between the girl's nervous malady and the phenomena; but the latter can scarcely have been due to bodily action of any ordinary kind. The circumstances were incompatible with this view. It looks much more as though a certain subconscious level of the personality, of a sub-intelligent character, may be able to express itself by exercising a physical force of an unknown kind which is dependent on an abnormal

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xviii, pp. 165–182.

physiological condition. The nature of this force is a mystery; but is the human body free of mysteries? Would any physiologist claim that it is?

It is interesting to recall a remark of the philosopher, Immanuel Kant: "That my will moves my arm," he said, "is not more intelligible to me than if somebody said to me that he could stop the moon in its orbit."[1]

[1] *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, p. 117.

25

PHYSICAL MEDIUMSHIP

Is there anything besides Fraud in the Physical Seance-room?

THE second branch of paranormal phenomena, in which physical effects are alleged to take place, is well known to the public. It has been for ages the happy hunting ground of tricksters and charlatans, and its sordid sensations seem to have struck the imagination of supporters and opponents alike. So much has it monopolised the field of attention that many people regard it as the sole problem with which psychical research is concerned. As a matter of fact, its importance is quite secondary.

One must, however, bear in mind that if these alleged physical phenomena could be abstracted from their associations with "Mr. Sludge" and treated under purely scientific conditions, there is not the slightest reason why they should be laughed at or treated as unimportant. Does an unusual physical state establish itself in the vicinity of a living human body which is in a peculiar psycho-physical condition? There is no justification for answering this question in the negative without putting the matter to the test of experiment. It would, indeed, be most unscientific to do so. But this question is bound up with a historical connection with fraud and credulity; therefore people tend to dismiss it out of hand.

Spiritualists make a wider claim for these phenomena. They claim that they (or some of them) are produced by the agency of the dead. Two phenomena in particular are advanced in support of this claim. One is the alleged "materialisation," in whole or in part, of a human body. The other is the "direct voice," in which, it is alleged, a deceased person speaks from some isolated point in space.

Perhaps one point with regard to these claims should be cleared up at the outset. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the entire body of a deceased person were recognisably materialised, or that the voice of a deceased

person, coming from a place unoccupied by any human being, was heard and recognised, we should be in exactly the same position with regard to the question whether or not the deceased person were actually responsible for it as we are when the same question arises with regard to mental communications. If it is plausible to suppose that messages purporting to come from the dead, which reproduce their mental characteristics, in reality originate with the medium, it is equally plausible to hold that materialisations or voices, purporting to be those of the dead, even if recognisable, are in reality caused by the medium. An audible voice or a visible form may be more *psychologically* persuasive than a written message; but logically the two are on a par. From an evidential point of view, the mental phenomena are superior, since a message is permanent while a materialisation is fleeting.

The first problem, however, to be decided is whether any unusual physical events take place in the neighbourhood of a physical medium. Again, selection of illustrative cases is difficult from the long and unhappy history of this subject.

The Society for Psychical Research has investigated a number of physical mediums, and in all, or nearly all, has discovered fraud; so that the problem resolves itself into discovering whether a modicum of genuine phenomena co-exist with this fraud. There is no particular advantage in selecting a new case; perhaps it is best to go back to the historically famous Italian medium, who was examined by a succession of eminent men in various countries—Eusapia Palladino. During the 1890s, she was examined by Lombroso, Schiaparelli, the astronomer, Richet, the French physiologist, Carl du Prel, Aksakoff, Ochorowicz and others. Some were enthusiastic in her support; others thought her performances entirely due to fraud. She was examined, not only all over the continent, but also in America and in England.

In 1908, the Society for Psychical Research appointed a committee of three to examine Eusapia Palladino in Naples. This committee consisted of Mr. Hereward Carrington, investigator for the American Society for Psychical Research and an amateur conjurer; Mr. W. W. Baggally, also an investigator and amateur conjurer of

much experience; and the Hon. Everard Feilding, who had had an extensive training as investigator and "a fairly complete education at the hands of fraudulent mediums." The medium was the daughter of an Italian peasant, and quite uneducated, being unable to read or to write more than her own name.

The subject of physical mediumship is well summed up by this investigating committee in the following words: "It is understating the case to say that the vast majority of these modern wizards and witches are the merest charlatans —sometimes, indeed, using mechanical and scientific apparatus of extreme ingenuity, but as a rule relying merely on the simplest devices, with an insolent confidence in the avid simplicity of their dupes. Yet every now and then a personality arises whose claims to something beyond such manifest imposture it has seemed impossible to dismiss thus curtly."[1]

The investigators prepared a room in their hotel at Naples with the usual curtained-off cabinet in the corner, variable electric lights, a small table of toys, etc. They engaged a shorthand writer. A plain deal table, some 3 feet long and 19 inches wide, was placed in front of the cabinet for the sittings. Everything was examined with the greatest care. On the arrival of the medium the door was locked and she was seated at the narrow end of the table with her back to the cabinet, and the back of her chair 18 inches from the curtain. For control, we are told that "one of us sat on each side of her, holding, or held by, her hand, with his foot under her foot, his leg generally pressing against the whole length of hers, often with his free hand across her knees, and very frequently with his two feet encircling her foot." The degree of control allowed varied according to the temper of the medium; but it was noticed that the best phenomena occurred when she was in a good temper and when the control allowed was most stringent. When a poor light was used, with consequently increased opportunities for fraud, there did not appear to be any increase of it. The exact conditions of lighting and control were taken down in shorthand on

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxiii, p. 310.

each occasion, together with the times and a full description of the phenomena. The report is thus somewhat long and tedious.

The chief phenomena consisted of movements or levitations of the table, with and without apparent contact; raps; movements of the curtain; touches by unseen finger-tips; noises inside the cabinet (*e.g.* the string of a guitar inside the cabinet was plucked); bulging of the medium's dress; appearance of grey objects like heads, and of a hand; hand-grasps through the curtain; a cold breeze from the medium's brow; lights; untying of knots. The number of recorded incidents, which were all tabulated, amounted to 470.

One of the medium's commonest tricks, in order to elude control, was to substitute one hand for the other. She would move her hands about and at last succeed in getting the two controllers to hold one hand when they thought they were holding both. This she did with great skill. "The tactile sensation of continuity of contact was unbroken," says the report. With the free hand she could, of course, produce phenomena. The same trick was performed with the feet, and there seems little doubt that on occasion Eusapia got her leg back into the cabinet and moved its contents about. The report on the sittings held at Cambridge in 1895 stated that systematic fraud had been used and that there was no evidence for anything paranormal. A similarly unfavourable report resulted from her sittings in America in 1910. There, two black-clothed figures, introduced by the experimenters, wriggled in along the floor and saw the medium reaching back with the hand and foot and moving things in the cabinet behind her.

The problem of these physical phenomena is thus always the same. There is no doubt of fraud; the question is whether there is anything else. The Palladino committee became convinced that, in spite of the fraud discovered by others and confirmed by themselves, there was a small modicum of effects which could not be explained in any normal manner. "It was only through constant repetition of the same phenomenon," they said, "in a good light and at moments when its occurrence was expected and after finding that none of the precautions which we took had

any influence in impeding it, that we gradually reached the conviction that some force was in play which was beyond the reach of ordinary control and beyond the skill of the most skilful conjurer. But though we have come to that general conclusion, we find it exceedingly difficult to say to which particular phenomena, or even to which particular kind of phenomena, we have sufficiently strict evidence to apply it." Their experience seemed to point to the view that in the majority of sittings nothing remarkable happened—perhaps some genuine raisings of the table or bulgings of the curtain occurred, eked out by fraud. But on rare occasions it seemed to them that striking and genuinely paranormal events really did happen. Only occasionally did the conditions for these appear to be realised. "It needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

In the conclusion to the report, Mr. Feilding said: "The phenomena, then—in themselves preposterous, futile and lacking in any quality of the smallest ethical, religious or spiritual value—are nevertheless symptomatic of something which, put at its lowest by choosing the first hypothesis [that no entity beyond the medium is involved] must, as it filters gradually into our common knowledge, most profoundly modify the whole of our philosophy of human faculty; but which, if that hypothesis is found insufficient, *may* ultimately be judged to require an interpretation involving not only that modification, but a still wider one, namely our knowledge between the relations of mankind and an intelligent sphere external to it."

I am not aware that any case of *complete* "materialisation," investigated by critical observers, has resulted in a favourable verdict. "Materialisations" consisting of regurgitated cheese-cloth are well-known. Yet one must be wary of jumping to conclusions. The early experiences of Sir William Crookes with D. D. Home were puzzling. Other cases besides that of Eusapia Palladino have suggested a residuum of genuine phenomena. And we must remember the innate tendency we all have to reject the phenomena at the start. Probably nothing in our whole make-up is so delusive as our tendency to be guided by common sense in our estimation of the probable in these matters. There is a definite limit to the field in which the

voice of common sense leads towards the truth. If anyone has a theory of the ultimate nature of human personality, or for that matter of the *ultimate* nature of anything else, which is wholly acceptable to common sense, it is pretty safe to say that that theory is wrong. The underlying truth about most things would probably seem wildly fantastic to us if we knew and could understand it.

The Palladino committee reported that when, on rare occasions, events occurred in spite of their precautions, which they were obliged to regard as genuine, they found that their minds automatically tried to reject them.

One feels inclined to ask why, if there are any genuine phenomena of this kind, they should not stand out clearly. Why should the subject be so riddled with imposture and fraud? One case throws a little light on this question. There was a medium named Anna Burton, who, at the age of thirteen, seems to have been in a similar condition to the girl mentioned in the last chapter, who became the centre of poltergeist phenomena. Raps occurred round Anna Burton while she was asleep. She was taken up and developed by a spiritualist. "None of the investigators," says a reviewer of her case, "none at least of those who had any opportunity for a prolonged examination of the case, have any doubt that, in her normal condition, Miss Burton is perfectly honest, and she has freely submitted herself to every suggested test."[1] The usual phenomena manifested themselves, raps, levitation of the table, movements of bells and tambourines, etc., but no rigid control was imposed. Had it been, this might have checked the tendency to simulate phenomena. The case then came under the observation of two doctors, who proved by flashlight photographs that the medium was using her hands and teeth to produce fraudulent effects. The doctors were satisfied that this was not done by deliberate, conscious fraud, but in a condition of hysteria, which they defined as "physiological and mental conditions that eliminate or limit normal consciousness." That Anna really did possess a curious faculty was shown by her ability to touch objects in the dark with extreme precision. She removed in the

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xv, p. 141.

dark a foreign body from the doctor's eye with a delicacy and precision which astonished him. But when she was in this so-called "hysterical" or trance-like condition, she resorted to fraud. The investigators found that she was still honest in her normal state, and that alternations between honesty and fraud depended on the depth of the trance.

One can see how fraud may creep into physical mediumship. Mediums may start by being honest; but genuine phenomena are rare, and sitters, especially if they have paid a fee, expect a continuous supply. Even then, the medium may not consciously wish to be fraudulent, but, when she is in a semi-conscious state, the desire to satisfy the sitters overcomes conscious scruples, and simple trickery begins.

This is astonishingly successful owing to the credulity of most sitters and the laxity of their control. It gradually grows, until at last fraud is practised consciously. Then, with a reputation to maintain on which her living depends, the medium cannot afford to dispense with it. There may be a few people who go into the business provided with a knowledge of the art of conjuring, who intend to use nothing but deliberate fraud from the start; but, on the whole, I am inclined to think that the reaction practised by most physical mediums is a kind of defence-reaction used to compensate for the paucity of genuine phenomena and encouraged by the credulity of sitters.

It is, perhaps, relevant to remember that accounts of certain physical phenomena are recorded in the literature of the lives of religious contemplatives. Cases of levitation are reported in records of saints and others living in religious communities. They may not have been recorded with scientific accuracy; but it is pertinent to inquire why, if something of the kind did not occur, such accounts should exist at all. There is no question of any desire for notoriety or gain. Convents and other religious houses did not *want* these things to happen in their midst. For a saint to be raised from the ground while kneeling in prayer was neither dignified nor desirable; yet there are many accounts of such things having happened.

One other point may be briefly dealt with. A long time

ago, a view was put forward and discussed[1] according to which the physical phenomena of mediumship, when not due to fraud, were regarded as being due to sensory hallucination. The argument was that the medium has the power, not of producing unusual physical effects, but of creating hallucinations in the minds of the sitters in much the same way as a hypnotist can create hallucinations in the minds of hypnotic subjects. Those who hold this view might quote as additional support certain experiments which were carried out by the Society for Psychical Research to test the reliability of witnesses' accounts of a physical sitting. In a mock-sitting the witnesses' accounts of what had occurred were found to be startlingly different from the facts. This was not due to sensory hallucination but simply to faulty observation and memory. It might be maintained that if a certain amount of sensory hallucination were added to these defects, alleged physical phenomena would be accounted for. But this view has to contend with difficulties.

Some of the physical objects seen to be moved during séances are found to remain moved afterwards. There is also much photographic evidence to prove that genuine physical phenomena do occur. The theory would have to maintain that all genuine physical happenings are fraudulent, while those not attributable to fraud are hallucinatory. It is difficult to draw a plausible line between the two classes of events. Nor must we forget Osty's experiments with infra-red rays and an ultra-violet ray camera taking photographs from the roof. According to these the infra-red beam kept on being interrupted when the camera showed that no physical object was interrupting it. It also registered a curious rapid pulsation in time with the medium's breathing.[2] Facts like these render the hallucinatory theory untenable, at any rate as a complete explanation.

Sittings for physical phenomena cannot be usefully epitomised in a general book. Everything depends on details, which must be studied in the original accounts. It has been said that, as evidence for communication from the

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxi, pp. 483–511.
[2] *Revue Métapsychique*, 1932.

dead, physical phenomena, even if certainly genuine, would be intellectually less satisfactory than mental phenomena. They might be *emotionally* more persuasive; but that is another thing. What, then, if true, would these phenomena prove? They would prove that, in the neighbourhood of a living human body in a particular state, the movement of objects and various other physical effects are brought about in some unknown way. Would this involve any radical novelty for science? Might not some invisible matter, of a kind not yet recognised, be exuded from the medium's body and exert the necessary mechanical forces, etc.? If this happened, some new physico-physiological process would be involved, but nothing necessarily revolutionary for the fundamental laws of physics.

Perhaps this will turn out to be the solution of these phenomena; for it is difficult to believe that fraud accounts for everything. But we must not hide from ourselves that there may be something deeper. The very much stronger evidence provided by mental phenomena commits us already to things extremely revolutionary for thought. Paranormal phenomena will not fit into a niche in the existing scheme of science. Either, room must be made for them by extending the existing scheme, or the principle of basing our knowledge on observed facts must be rejected. We seem to be faced by no less a possibility than that the scheme of space, time, matter and causality may be only a *department* of nature and that there may be another order of things behind it, which occasionally shows through. If this is so, a prolonged and stubborn fight against paranormal facts is to be expected, because our mentality is adapted to the space-time-matter-causal scheme and will strenuously resist any evidence which tends to show that it is not universal. The antecedent attitude of the human mind towards the paranormal becomes a factor of the greatest importance—of greater importance, even, than the evidence. Why not, then, go straight to the crux of the matter and investigate this attitude? It is one of the most interesting and important issues that psychical research has raised.

IX

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SUBJECT

26

ATTITUDE TO PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Are Men of Science Impersonal about Facts?

ANYONE, previously unacquainted with psychical research, who suddenly acquired a true idea of the strength of the evidence, would surely have one question uppermost in his mind. Why has this subject been universally ignored? Why has it been sneered at and ridiculed and regarded as a pastime for the credulous? Why has not the scientific world recognised its importance, resolutely swept aside the rubbish, and established the true facts? Why, if there are none, has this not been demonstrated? As Henry Sidgwick pointed out in 1882, if only a tenth part of these alleged occurrences are true, they are of the utmost importance. Anyone who thinks clearly must surely agree with him.

There are probably several reasons why the scientific and educated public, for the most part, ignores psychical research. (1) The subject has from time immemorial been surrounded by charlatanry and fraud, and the practice of magic in the past gave paranormal phenomena a bad reputation. (2) Anyone who confesses to an interest in these matters to-day risks his professional reputation. (3) The quantity of sound evidence is not large, compared with that amassed by other sciences, and people persuade themselves that it is too small to be worth taking into account. (4) There is no commercial profit to be made by working in the subject. (5) People say they are too busy and have no time for such things.

The lack of substance in these objections is fairly obvious. (1) It is quite possible to distinguish sound from unsound

evidence and to establish sound conditions for research. (2) The risk to professional reputation is the result of the general attitude and not its cause. (3) The amount of sound evidence is far too great to be ignored. Also, *no* admittedly sound evidence, however small, can be conscientiously ignored by the scientific mind. (4) The fact that there is no money to be made is again a result of the general lack of interest in the subjects; not its cause. Pure research, once its value is recognised, finds its endowments. (5) People cannot be too busy to attend to a subject throughout half a century if it is of any importance. Besides, the phenomena of psychical research are of direct professional concern to psychologists, philosophers, clergymen and others.

It is clear that all these, even if genuinely acting, are symptoms rather than causes. The fundamental cause must lie deeper. What is it?

It was mentioned just now that the little committee appointed to investigate the case of Eusapia Palladino stated that, on the rare occasions when they encountered phenomena which they were forced to regard as genuine, their minds automatically tried to reject them. In the committee's report we find these words: "The incidents seemed to roll off our minds, and . . . we lapsed back into scepticism on each occasion." Mr. Everard Feilding, when investigating another case, used words to the same effect: "The effect of all this on my mind," he said, "was singular. I appeared to lose touch with actualities. Once admit the possibility of such things—and the mere fact of investigating them implied such an admission—where could one stop? I wrote at the time that I gradually began to feel that if a man seriously told me that the statue of the Albert Memorial had called in to tea I should have to admit that the question to be solved would not be the sanity of the narrator but the evidence for the fact." There is undoubtedly an *instinct* which urges us to reject the unusual and the inexplicable *whatever* the evidence in its favour may be. It tends to make evidence fall away from our minds like water off a duck's back. Lord Chesterfield pointed out this tendency when he said that if a man indubitably rose from the dead, in three days, the Archbishop of Canterbury would disbelieve it.

There is, of course, the opposite tendency to exaggerate marvels and cause rumours to grow; but the cause of this seems to be different. It is due more to an intellectual tendency—a love of marvels and sensations coupled with a lack of critical faculty. The reaction against the unaccustomed is more psychological than intellectual. It is the hand of nature keeping us adjusted to our normal environment and screening us from disturbing intrusions.

Demetrius, as he walks with Helena and looks back on their adventures of the Midsummer Night, says:

> "These things seem small and indistinguishable
> Like far-off mountains turned into clouds."

Shakespeare expresses here the *psychological* tendency to "recover" after some new and unprecedented experience. In the light of the normal, such experiences tend to fade away. We are impressed at the time; but as soon as familiar conditions reassert themselves, the rationalising faculty rises up and, in obedience to a psychological urge, begins to explain them away. Our whole conception of the probable is based on what we are accustomed to, so that we reckon antecedent probability or improbability far more by *feeling* than by *reason*. Suppose that, before the duck-billed platypus was known, some lone traveller claimed to have seen one in Australia, nearly everyone would have laughed at his description of the animal and declared it absurd to suppose that such a creature could exist. There would have been nothing rational about this attitude. No one could possibly know, apart from direct evidence, whether a platypus was likely to exist or not. But the story would have been laughed to scorn simply because a platypus is so unlike anything that people in this country are accustomed to.

This habit of judging probability in the light of custom is universally human. Conservatism, insularity, provincialism are phases of it. We know how people used to laugh at the customs of foreigners because they were strange. Some still do. A Dutchman, it is said, once told a native of Java that in his own country the water became so hard in winter that men could walk on it. The Javanese was convulsed with laughter at the absurdity of the idea. His

scheme of the familiar was outraged. But we must be careful how we laugh at him; for grave and wise philosophers, scientists and intellectuals of all kinds (and ordinary people too) do precisely the same thing at the mention of telepathy and precognition. The highly intellectual are just as liable to be overwhelmed by a *psychological* impulse as is the man in the street.

Let us examine the attitude adopted by men of science towards psychical research. In the early days, hypnotism (then called mesmerism) called forth bitter opposition and was regarded as being on a par with paranormal phenomena. The committee appointed by the Society for Psychical Research to report on hypnotism quoted the *Lancet* as saying: "We regard the abettors of mesmerism as quacks and impostors; they ought to be hooted out of professional society." The medical profession in those days refused to admit the genuineness of hypnosis. "When the most painful surgical operations were successfully performed in the hypnotic state, they said that the patients were bribed to sham insensibility; and that it was because they were hardened impostors that they let their legs be cut off and large tumours be cut out without showing any sign even of discomfort. At length this belief, in all but the most bigoted partisans, gave way before the triumphant success of Mr. Esdaile's surgical operations under mesmerism in the Calcutta Hospital. . . ."[1]

One notices that the suggestion that hypnotism was genuine aroused intense *emotional* hostility because it was then considered to be what we now call "paranormal." When people came to regard it as "normal," the emotional hostility ceased. Hypnotism is no more fundamentally understood to-day than it was in Esdaile's time; but the resentment has passed away.

The same attitude prevailed with regard to telepathy, at one time called "thought-transference." "The present state of scientific opinion throughout the world is not only hostile to any belief in the possibility of transmitting a single mental concept, except through the ordinary channels of sensation, but, generally speaking, it is hostile even to any inquiry on the matter. Every leading physiologist and

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. ii, p. 154.

psychologist down to the present time has relegated what, for want of a better term, has been called 'thought-reading' to the limbo of exploded fallacies." These are the words of the committee appointed by the Society for Psychical Research to investigate thought-transference, or telepathy, in 1882. Again, they say: "In the July number of the *Nineteenth Century* the senior assistant physician at the Westminster Hospital expresses his amazement at the hardihood of anyone having the slightest pretence to scientific knowledge daring to put forth evidence in favour of thought-reading: and a recent writer in the *Saturday Review* gives utterance to the general scientific attitude of the present day on this subject, when he remarks that 'We thought we had heard the last of thought-reading'." This same committee reported that: "Collusion, hallucination, unconscious interpretation of unconsciously imparted signs, furnish, according to the physiologists of to-day, abundant explanation of the phenomena under investigation." A year earlier, a committee of distinguished men had been called together to investigate the performances of Mr. Irving Bishop, a professing thought-reader. After a few hastily-conducted experiments, it drew up a report in which it is indicated that one member of the committee, Professor Ray Lankester, "absolutely refused to countenance the idea of thought-reading, and objected to the other members . . . giving even a fair trial to 'so puerile a hypothesis'."[1]

Again, it is significant that so distinguished and able a scientist as Lord Kelvin said: "One half of hypnotism and clairvoyance is imposture and the rest bad observation." Haeckel said: "So-called telepathy only exists in the imagination; everything is explained by excitement and an active imagination, coupled with a lack of critical faculty and physiological knowledge."[2]

There was, however, a minority who held a moderate opinion in the nineteenth century, just as there is to-day. For example, in an obituary notice of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, written in 1898, F. W. H. Myers says: "Mr. Gladstone's broad intellectual purview—aided, perhaps, in this instance by something of the practical foresight of the

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. i, pp. 13–4.
[2] *The Riddle of the Universe.*

statesman—placed him in quite a different attitude towards our quest [psychical research]. 'It is the most important work which is being done in the world,' he said in a conversation in 1885. 'By far the most important,' he repeated with a grave emphasis which suggested previous trains of thought. . . . He . . . ended by saying: 'If you will accept sympathy without service, I shall be glad to join your ranks.' He became an Honorary Member and followed with attention . . . the successive issues of our *Proceedings*."[1]

Here it may be mentioned that other prominent Victorians, honorary members of the Society for Psychical Research and greatly interested in the subject, were John Ruskin, G. F. Watts and A. R. Wallace.

To go back to an earlier epoch, here is an interesting passage about the attitude of Dr. Johnson on these matters. Boswell wrote: "He has been ignorantly misrepresented as weakly credulous upon that subject; and therefore, though I feel an inclination to disdain and treat with silent contempt so foolish a notion concerning my illustrious friend, yet as I find it has gained ground, it is necessary to refute it. The real fact, then, is that Johnson had a very philosophical mind and such a rational respect for testimony as to make him submit his understanding to what was authentically proved, though he could not comprehend why it was so. Being thus disposed, he was willing to inquire into the truth of any relation of supernatural agency, a general belief which has prevailed in all nations and ages. But so far was he from being the dupe of implicit faith, that he examined the matter with a jealous attention, and no man was more ready to refute its falsehood when he had discovered it."[2] His was the true scientific attitude.

But these balanced minds were the exception. The majority made up their minds in advance. Buchner is quoted as saying: "Science has not the least doubt that all alleged cases of clairvoyance are the result of charlatanry and illusion. Lucidity, for material reasons, is an impossibility." Similarly, Wundt is quoted as saying: "If

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. viii, p. 260.

[2] Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, Everyman Edition, Vol. i, pp.251–2.

telepathy existed, it would be necessary to postulate the existence of an irrational world, at the expense of the rational one."[1] These quotations show that those who spoke thus thought that, by pre-judging the issue without referring to the facts, they were acting in the spirit of science. This pre-judgment on the part of scientists and others appears to be the chief characteristic of the general attitude. Some illuminating examples of this are to be found in the book of a reliable American author, Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, entitled *The Enchanted Boundary*.

Professor L. T. Troland, a psychologist of Harvard University, wrote in 1926: "The modern psychologist tends to regard alleged psychical phenomena much as the modern physicist regards perpetual-motion machines."[2]

Professor Joseph Jastrow, a psychologist of Wisconsin University, wrote of telepathy in 1901: "There is no burden of disproof resting on the scientist." Yet by 1901 a great deal of carefully collected evidence for telepathy existed, which no one had shown to be unsound. He goes on to ask: "What is the logical conclusion to be drawn from the data offerable in evidence of some super-sensory form of thought-transference and whence the disposition to believe in the existence of such a procedure? . . . I can say no more in discussing the topic than that to me the phenomena represent a complex conglomerate in which imperfectly recognised modes of action, hyperæsthesia and hysteria, fraud, conscious and unconscious, chance, collusion, similarity of mental process, an expectant interest in presentiments and a belief in their significance, nervousness and ill-health, illusions of memory, hallucinations, suggestions, contagion and other elements enter into the composition; while defective observation, falsification of memory, forgetfulness of details, bias and prepossession, suggestion from others, lack of training and of a proper investigative temperament further invalidate and confuse the records of what is supposed to have been observed. Many of the reported facts are not facts at all; others are too distortedly and too deficiently reported to be either

[1] *Revue Métapsychique*, 1935.

[2] *The Mystery of Mind*, p. 3.

intelligible or suggestive; some are accurately observed and properly recorded, and these sometimes contain a probable suggestion of their natural explanation, sometimes must be put down as chance, and more often must be left unexplained. To call this absence of explanation telepathy is surely no advantage; to pose this hypothetic process as the *modus operandi* of any result which can be even remotely and contingently otherwise accounted for seems superfluous; to actually use this hypothesis to account for still more obscure and more indefinite and less clearly established phenomena is an egregious logical sin."[1]

This is a good example of a verbal smoke-screen. Nowhere is any concrete piece of evidence dealt with: nowhere is the slightest attempt made to show that a single one of the suggested explanations applies to the facts. Everything is vague innuendo, while the emotional character of the outburst is obvious. It is all very instructive and interesting; and the professor obligingly goes on to tell us *why* the smoke-screen has been emitted. "Obviously," he writes, "if the alleged facts of psychical research were genuine and real the labours of science would be futile and blind." And, again: "What the revival of the belief in occultism proves is the weak hold which principle and logic have gained upon minds otherwise of fine quality and more than ordinary calibre."[2]

Note the insistence on logic. Whitehead might have quoted him as a modern protagonist of rationalism against the empirical principle of science. He is afraid that if certain apparent facts were to prove true, the rational order of things would be upset.

Professor H. C. Warren wrote in 1919, in his book, *Human Psychology*, of "societies for psychical research." He says that reports "collected by sincere and unimpeachable scientists fill volumes of the *Proceedings* of these Societies; but," he continues, "contemporary American psychologists for the most part reject the telepathic interpretation." For this he gives the following curious collection of reasons: (1) On account of the faulty memory of the

[1] *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, pp. 103–4.

[2] *Weekly Review*, July 14 and 18, 1920.

witnesses. (2) On account of chance-coincidence. (3) On account of collusion and fraud. (4) On account of unobserved sensory impulses. (5) On account of the "trend of evolution." (6) Because if a simpler mode of communication, such as telepathy, had been possible, nature would not have taken the trouble to evolve complex sense-organs. Here, again, with regard to the first four reasons, we have the same vague generalising. No acknowledgement is made of the fact that the investigators of the Society for Psychical Research made full allowance for these possible sources of error. There is nothing concrete. There is no citation of any case in which these precautions were omitted. The last two reasons are hard to follow. The learned professor seems to claim inside information about the methods and processes of nature.

Professor H. A. Carr, of the University of Chicago, in his book, *Psychology* (1925), says: "The doctrine of telepathy assumes that one mind can influence another mind in the absence of any known sensory communication between them. . . . Orthodox psychology regards the evidence for such assumptions as unconvincing." Here, again, all detailed evidence is swept away in one comprehensive gesture.

August Forel, in his book, *Hypnotism and Psycho-Therapy*, says: "The experiments of Charles Richet are also interesting. He attempts to prove the influence of the thinking of one individual on the thinking of another in a certain direction without appearances which can be sensorily perceived. It appears, however, that the proofs are extremely imperfect, and the probability calculation very unconvincing. The later investigations of von Schrenk-Notzing, Flournoy and others have also failed to arrive at definite conclusions. . . . Since the third edition of this book there has been nothing new of importance relative to the subject of telepathy to report." The third edition was published in 1906. By that time sound evidence for telepathy had been accumulated by the Society for Psychical Research for twenty-four years. Then comes a revealing sentence: "All the stories of spiritualists and superficial individuals have not been able to alter anything belonging to these facts." The emotional bias peeps out again. Note

also that Richet, who was making perfectly impersonal experiments in order to find out whether telepathy occurred or not, is represented as "trying to prove" it. It is true, however, that Richet made mistakes in his probability calculations. But the main point is that, all the way through, the critics are not arguing that paranormal phenomena are *untrue as a matter of fact* but that they must be *untrue as a matter of principle*.

In the *Psychological Bulletin* for May, 1931, Mr. Paul Campbell Young of Louisiana State University is commented on as reviewing a number of books on hypnotism and suggestion. The commentator on this review says: "Under the title 'Occult Hold-Over,' Mr. Young deplores the fact that in spite of time and derision, the old notions that hypnosis brings with it mysterious powers, such as clairvoyance, telepathy and other manifestations linked up with the old theory of animal magnetism, still persists." The idea is that the paranormal is a relic of dying superstition.

In 1925, Professor Titchener, referred to by another prominent psychologist as "the leading experimental psychologist of our time," said: "No scientifically-minded psychologist believes in telepathy."[1]

Professor Simon Newcomb, who was head of the Department of Astronomy at the Johns Hopkins University and Director of the United States Naval Observatory, said, in the course of an article in the *Nineteenth Century* for January, 1909: "The volumes of *Phantasms of the Living* might be continued annually without end, could all the cases be discovered. The few hundred cases are actually fewer than we should expect as the result of known conditions. There is, therefore, no proof of telepathy in any of the wonders narrated in these volumes, and in the publications of the Psychical Society." It may be explained that *Phantasms of the Living* was a collection of carefully sifted cases of telepathic apparitions compiled by Edmund Gurney and others, who were early investigators in psychical research. The statement is so muddled as to be meaningless; yet Professor Newcomb must have need an able man

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xxii. p. 52,

to have held the posts he did. Something resembling a psychological complex seems to have displaced his normal reasoning powers. He apparently *wants* to think that there is no such thing as telepathy and tries to justify the wish; but his justification becomes a mist of words. Even then he cannot leave it alone. "I even venture to say," he continues, "that if thought-transference is real, we shall establish the reality more speedily by leaving it out of consideration, and collecting facts for study than by directing our attention directly to it." Yet this man must have been able to think lucidly in the course of his ordinary occupation!

Miss Amy Tanner published a book in 1910 entitled *Studies in Spiritism*, though in reality it deals more with psychical research than with spiritualism. In one way Miss Tanner is a more interesting critic than most, for she actually read the subject before criticising it. But she, too, wanders in a maze of irrationality. For three years she had been the "research co-adjutator" of Professor G. Stanley Hall, the President of Clark University. The extraordinary perversities of her analyses are pointed out by Mrs. Sidgwick.[1] Dr. Walter F. Prince compared a number of Miss Tanner's summarised incidents with the accounts in the original records and "found them almost without exception atrocious to the point of becoming comic. It seemed to me," he said, "that she was incapable of grasping the salient points in any paragraph more than two inches in length." Dr. Hyslop found in 27 incidents 148 misstatements and a host of omissions of important particulars, while, he says, she was silent on 38 incidents more significant than any she treated in her fashion. Yet Dr. Stanley Hall, blind to all this, wrote an introduction to her book and called it a "searching, impartial, critical estimate." He says: "It is significant that the chief works of the English Psychic Society have never before had a searching, impartial, critical estimate, often as they have been worked over by believers. Those with scepticism enough to have been impartial have never been able to arouse interest enough to treat these studies thoroughly. Thus, I

[1] See *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. xxv., pp. 102–8.

cannot but hope that this book will mark a turn of the tide."

The significant thing about all this criticism is that not only are these critics unconvinced by evidence but they are so carried away by emotion that they lose all sense of accuracy. They employ arguments which a child could refute. Sometimes they become practically incoherent, like Professor Newcomb. Scarcely ever does one find a critic of psychical research who deals with concrete facts in a sane and rational manner. The criticism of this subject is "an unbroken fluency of indefinite half-truths," where it does not degenerate into something worse.

In 1920, Mr. Joseph McCabe wrote a book entitled *Spiritualism: a Popular History from 1847.* The book, where it deals with psychical research and not with spiritualism, is described by Dr. W. F. Prince as being "replete with blunder and innuendo." An account given of a single incident connected with the Society for Psychical Research contains five mis-statements of fact and even locates the incident in the wrong country!

Miss Margaret Washburn, a psychologist of excellent standing and co-editor of the *American Journal of Psychology*, published, in 1920, an article entitled, *Psychology and Spiritism*, in a periodical called the *Chronicle.* In it she said, referring to sittings with mediums, that for a sitting to be of value, every word spoken by the sitter or by any person present should be recorded. She then added: "This precaution has been almost uniformly neglected." Yet, had she read the *Proceedings* and *Journal* of either the English or American Society for Psychical Research, she would have discovered that the method she advocated and stated to have been neglected had been the standard practice for years.

Dr. Ivor L. Tuckett, in a book entitled *The Evidence for the Supernatural*, says: "We know that the Society for Psychical Research was founded in order to establish the existence of telepathy. Therefore it is fair to consider that those early members of the Society for Psychical Research were biassed in favour of telepathy." Had Dr. Tuckett known anything about the Society for Psychical Research he would have been aware that it was not founded to

establish telepathy or anything else. He might have read the articles of association of the society or their reflection in the words of its first President, Professor Henry Sidgwick. "Some of those whom I address feel, no doubt, that this attempt [psychical research] can only lead to the proof of most of the alleged phenomena; some again think it most probable that most, if not all, will be disproved. But, regarded as a society, we are quite unpledged, and as individuals we are all agreed that any particular investigation that we may make should be carried on with a single-minded desire to ascertain the facts and without any fore-gone conclusion as to their nature."[1]

Perhaps some may be inclined to think that if only *quantitative* types of experiment were used, such as those described in Chapters 12, 13 and 14, in which the results are expressed mathematically, all differences of opinion would vanish and all discussion be at an end. Unfortunately, prejudice is not so easily overcome. Dr. J. E. Coover, of Stanford University, and Professor L. T. Troland of Harvard University both carried out quantitative experiments in extra-sensory perception and both stated that their results showed nothing more than chance could account for. Re-examination of their figures by others showed that the results of both were significant. A reviewer of Coover's case writes: "He evidently suffered from a singularly strong resistance to admitting evidence in favour of extra-sensory perception, and declared in the strongest terms that his results showed no trace of anything beyond chance. Actually the odds were some thousands to one against chance alone being responsible for them. . . ." With regard to Professor Troland, we are told: "But Coover did at least collect some 12,000 odd relevant observations and wrote 641 pages of mingled text and tables, while Troland seemed to think that honour would be satisfied with no more than 605 trials—say ten hours work—and 26 pages of print."[2] We have seen that Troland thought paranormal phenomena were logical impossibilities; it is therefore surprising that he made any experiments at all.

[1] *Proceedings* S.P.R., Vol. i. p. 8.
[2] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xxx., p. 296

What is the matter with all these people, one wonders? Are they wandering in some enchanted wood? Why has judgment, balance and poise deserted them? If anyone is disposed to think that a man who professes the principles of science is bound to welcome *any* novel facts, on evidence, let him read the following passage from an article by Professor Chester Kellogg, of McGill University, entitled *New Evidence (?) for Extra-Sensory Perception.*[1]. "Since Dr. Rhine's reports have led to investigations in many other institutions it might seem unnecessary to prick the bubble as the truth eventually will out and the craze subside. But meanwhile the public is being misled, the energies of young men and women in their most vital years of professional training are being diverted into a side issue and funds expended that might instead support research into problems of real importance for human welfare. This has gone so far that a new *Journal of Parapsychology* has been founded. . . ." Could any clearer evidence be wanted of a refusal to decide the question of telepathy by reference to facts? Professor Kellogg had, in 1937, not only the general evidence for telepathy which we have dealt with above, but a great deal of statistical evidence as well. He sweeps the whole of it aside in favour of an *a priori* judgment.

[1] *The Scientific Monthly*, October, 1937, Vol. xlv, pp. 331–41.

27

ATTITUDE TO PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Still more Evidence on this Question – Its Fundamental Importance

EXAMPLES of attitude towards the evidence of psychical research are not very plentiful because most people ignore the subject completely and do not express any opinion. But a small number of revealing instances are to be found on this as well as on the other side of the Atlantic.

On the 11th February, 1939, the scientific journal *Nature* published a review of some books dealing with scientific psychical research. These books were entitled, *Evidence of Purpose*, by Zoe Richmond; *Foreknowledge*, by H. F. Saltmarsh; *Ghosts and Apparitions*, by W. H. Salter; *Hypnosis, its Meaning and Practice*, by Eric Cudden (all published by G. Bell & Sons, Ltd.); and *Science and Psychical Phenomena*, by G. N. M. Tyrrell (Methuen & Co., Ltd.). The anonymous reviewer of these books said: "It can scarcely be denied that, viewed as attempts to claim scientific recognition, these volumes are of great interest. To one wholly untrained in psychical research and with no knowledge of what lies behind much of the impressive façade, the effect must be considerable. Only careful analysis and years of experience will weaken that effect, for it is but here and there that the authors under review cite cases as good, which are clearly so full of flaws that suspicion of their critical faculties is aroused."

Read these words carefully, and you will see that the reviewer *assumes* that the existing, carefully collected evidence of psychical research *can* be nothing but a façade and that careful analysis and years of experience are *bound* to weaken its effect. It is unlikely that this reviewer has devoted even a single year to the study of the evidence. He light-heartedly brushes aside the impartial appeal to fact in favour of his own *a priori* assumption that there *can* be nothing in it. His attitude reminds one of a story told

of Sir William Hamilton and Sir George Airy. "Hamilton had just published his famous mathematical discovery of quaternions and was, I believe, explaining it to Airy. After a short time Airy said: 'I cannot see it at all.' Hamilton replied: 'I have been investigating the matter closely for many months and I am certain of its truth.' 'Oh,' rejoined Airy, 'I have been thinking over it for the last two or three minutes and there is nothing in it.'"[1]

We have already quoted August Forel as stating that Richet was "trying to prove" telepathy because he made some experiments on the subject. There are other instances of this curious inability to understand the empirical character of scientific research.

Dr. Wilfred Lay, a psycho-analyst, says in a book entitled *Man's Unconscious Spirit*: "Psychical research is striving to prove that the laws of the material universe are not the same as those of the world of mind and spirit, and this without adequately showing what is the relation of mind or spirit to matter, and even incidentally what mind or spirit really is." A charming conception, by the way, of an incidental discovery!

Even Dr. W. R. Inge has written: "Psychical research is trying to prove that eternal values are temporal facts, which they can never be."[2]

When people twist a strictly impersonal inquiry into an "attempt to prove" something, this is surely evidence of an emotional bias at work in their minds.

Another very curious feature is characteristic of the attitude of many people towards this subject. Psychical research is frequently treated with a light-hearted and even frivolous irresponsibility on the assumption, apparently, that it is not of the slightest significance or importance. Men of science betray a haste and carelessness in dealing with it which would wreck their reputations if they did the same thing in any other department of knowledge. They seem to think that the most abstruse and difficult questions concerning the human being can be disposed of on the spur of the moment.

[1] Sir William F. Barrett, F.R.S., *Presidential Address*, S.P.R., 29th January, 1904.

[2] *Outspoken Essays, First Volume*, p. 269.

In the course of an article entitled *Theories of Immortality*, Professor A. D. Ritchie mentions psychical research.[1] "It has to be admitted," he says, "that a number of very queer and obscure phenomena have been observed that do not fit in well with orthodox theories about bodies and minds and their relation. These phenomena can be interpreted in terms of a theory of 'spirits' but they can equally well be interpreted otherwise and with a saving of gratuitous hypotheses. It seems that one must accept either telepathy or clairvoyance as a fact and most probably both as independent facts. Well, granted telepathy and clairvoyance, and granted, too, the possibility of a certain amount of distortion of the temporal sequence of events, so that what is in the future for one person's experience is not always in the future for another's, it seems possible to account for all alleged 'spirit' communications. It can, perhaps, be done by means of telepathy and clairvoyance without temporal distortion, or by telepathy and temporal distortion without clairvoyance. The point is that the 'spirits' have never reported anything which has not been already known to some living person, or about to be known in the near future, or available in written documents, or by means of some already existing material evidence." Thus, in some twenty lines, this philosopher disposes of problems which are probably the most abstruse and difficult that have ever confronted the human mind. As well might Newton have settled the problems of gravitation while he was finishing his breakfast! This is only one more piece of evidence that a *psychological complex* exists concerning this subject which comes into play directly the paranormal appears on the scene.

Here is another example. In Chapter 13, experiments were described which had been carried out by Mr. Whately Carington under the terms of the Perrott Studentship for Psychical Research established at Trinity College, Cambridge. When the announcement of this Studentship was made public, *The Times*, in its issue of the 19th February, 1940, published a humorous article about it, entitled *Reader in Ghosts*; while the *News Chronicle* announced on the

[1] *Philosophy*, April 1942, No. 66.

12th February, 1940: "Cambridge has a Ghost Scholarship"! Perhaps nothing could illustrate so clearly as this the attitude of the public towards psychical research; for the press reflects public opinion. The general opinion evidently is that the study of human personality is not a matter to be taken seriously. Something *psychological* is at work under the conscious surface of the critic's mind which spurs him on to reject facts without testing them, if they depart too far from what is familiar.

William James asks pertinently: "Why do so few 'scientists' ever look at the evidence for telepathy, so-called? Because they think, as a leading biologist, now dead, once said to me, that even if such a thing were true, scientists ought to band together to keep it suppressed and concealed. It would undo the uniformity of nature and all sorts of other things without which scientists cannot carry on their pursuits."[1]

An apt criticism of the common attitude towards psychical research occurs in Professor C. D. Broad's *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, p. 550. "It compels one either to ignore all the phenomena in question," he says, "or to be continually occupied in explaining them away. The former course is not scientifically respectable; for it is quite certain that many people, quite as sensible as oneself and far more expert, have personally investigated these matters and have persuaded themselves of the genuineness of these phenomena and of the impossibility of explaining them completely by fraud or mistake. And the latter course may at any moment be barred by some fact which we simply cannot explain away."

Examples could be multiplied; but the answer to our question of why psychical research has been so universally ignored is surely abundantly clear. The major part of the scientific world does not *wish* to examine the evidence but endeavours only to evade and escape from it. It is not animated by a scientific desire to know the truth but is in the grip of a psychological urge to disallow what is distressingly unfamiliar. And this impulse is shared generally by educated people in the West. Ponder the significance of

[1] *The Will to Believe*, pp. 10–11.

this fact, and the tremendous implication which lies behind it will slowly dawn upon you. Even in the midst of this age of science, Thomas Huxley's advice to "sit down before fact like a little child" is not whole-heartedly followed. We will touch again on this topic when we reach Chapter 29.

Of course, there are exceptions to the attitude we have been describing. On p. 231 certain Victorians were mentioned who were conspicuously open-minded towards psychical research. There is, and always has been, a minority of such opinion. Professor William McDougall supplied an example of a psychologist who appreciated to the full its importance. When he left England to take the Chair of Psychology at Duke University, North Carolina, he actively encouraged the experimental work there carried on by Prof. J. B. Rhine. The following passages reveal his sense of the wider significance of the subject. "If materialism is true," he wrote, "let us ascertain the fact by all means; let the truth be told though the heavens fall and the gods also. And let us then hope that civilisation may succeed in adjusting itself to this truth and, by its aid, may render human life better worth living. But at present it is clear that the civilised world is becoming more and more acutely divided on this question, the question of the truth of materialism. This lack of sure knowledge, and the consequent wide and widening divergence of opinion, is a scandal, a reproach to our boasted scientific culture and an actual and increasing social danger. Here, then, is one good reason why the complete scientific materialist should support psychical research."

Again, he wrote: "The case may be simply stated in this way. If materialism is true, human life, fundamentally and generally speaking, is not worth living; and men and women who believe materialism to be true will not in the long run think themselves justified in creating, in calling to life, new individuals to meet the inevitable pains and sorrows and labours of life and the risks of many things far worse than death. Human life, as we know it, is a tragic and pathetic affair which can only be redeemed by some belief or at least some hope in a larger significance than is compatible with the creed of materialism, no matter in how nobly stoic a form it may be held. The fact cannot

be gainsaid and men and women acknowledge it by their actions. A civilisation which resigns itself wholly to materialism lives upon and consumes its moral capital and is incapable of renewing it."

Still again: "Unless psychical research—that is to say inquiry according to the strictest principles of empirical science—can discover facts incompatible with materialism, materialism will continue to spread. No other power can stop it; revealed religion and metaphysical philosophy are equally helpless before the advancing tide. And if that tide continues to rise and to advance as it is doing now, all the signs point to the view that it will be a destroying tide, that it will sweep away all the hard-won gains of humanity, all the moral traditions built up by the efforts of countless generations for the increase of truth, justice and charity."[1] This is the social incidence of psychical research.

Professor Henri Bergson said: "I regard the field open to psychical research as very vast, and even as unlimited. This new science will soon make up the time lost."[2]

Professor C. D. Broad, in the course of a speech broadcast on the wireless in 1934, after giving some examples of the attitude of philosophers towards psychical research, added: "It is plain from my examples that the alleged facts which they ignore are directly relevant to the very problems which it is their main business to discuss."

Dr. L. P. Jacks said with reference to psychical research: "We are working in a region densely populated with the hopes and fears of men; and not only with hopes and fears, but with superstitions, obsessions, preconceptions and fixed ideas innumerable. These things swarm round the inquirer like the evil spirits which beset the path of Bunyan's Pilgrim as he passed through the Valley of Humiliation. They threaten at every turn to drive us off from the straight and narrow road of strict scientific inquiry; they are immensely active; and nowhere are they more active than in the criticisms and the occasional contempt which are poured upon the work of this Society by those who hold aloof from it. My plea is that we should turn our back

[1] *Religion and the Sciences of Life*, pp. 53, 58 and 59.

[2] *Presidential Address* to the Society for Psychical Research, 28 May, 1913.

upon them all; upon the hopes and fears and all the other emotional interests that are at stake as well as upon the superstitions and fixed ideas. That is easy to say but difficult to carry out."[1]

It is also interesting to note that that representative scientific body, the British Association for the Advancement of Science, has shown a certain softening of opinion towards psychical research. In 1876, a paper dealing with this subject was read to it by Sir William Barrett but was unfavourably received. In 1920, at a meeting of the British Association at Cardiff, a paper was read by Dr. Prideaux of Nottingham before the Psychological Sub-section of Physiology (Section I) entitled, *A Psychologist's Attitude towards Telepathy*. This paper does not appear to have been published; but it was allowed to be read. At a meeting in Leeds in September, 1927, the President of the Psychology Section, Dr. William Brown, referred in his Presidential Address to personal survival of bodily death and described the investigations of the Society for Psychical Research as rightly claiming "a place in modern psychological science."

Dr. T. W. Mitchell, in a paper on the *Phenomena of the Mediumistic Trance*, read before the Psychology Section at the Leeds meeting in September, 1927, said: "Telepathy or some mode of acquiring knowledge, which for the present we might call supernormal, must be admitted, for if we refuse to accept telepathy, we stood helpless in face of well-attested phenomena which we could not account for and could not deny." Dr. C. T. S. Myers, who presided, said he would not like it to go forth that all psychologists had definitely made up their minds about telepathy. Many of them neither denied nor accepted it, and he was one of these. He felt that the evidence was not yet strong enough to decide whether telepathy existed or not. He was maintaining an open mind."

Favourable references are sometimes to be found in books on psychology. Dr. William Brown in his book *Psychology and Psycho-therapy* (1934) says: "But what of telepathy—the transference of thought independently of

[1] *Presidential Address* to the Society for Psychical Research, 28th June, 1917.

bodily media? Are we entitled to assume that such a thing exists . . .? The *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research and the pages of its *Journal* are crowded with evidence of too strong a nature to be explained away."

Dr. C. B. Cutten in *Mind, its Origin and Goal* (1925) says: "Up to a few years ago it would have been dogmatically affirmed that we know of no mental action except as it is manifested through speech or some other bodily movement or experience. Now, however, there seems to be a growing belief that telepathy, the transference of thought without the use of the ordinary means of expression, is being established."

Messrs. Paul and W. R. Bonsfield in *The Mind and its Mechanism* (1927) say: "Telepathy is a phenomenon with which psychologists will more and more have to reckon."

Professor Hans Driesch in his book, *The Crisis of Psychology* (1925) assumes telepathy to be a fact.

William James and F. C. S. Schiller, already quoted, are two more examples of favourably disposed philosophers in the past. We have already quoted the balanced attitude and interest taken by Professor Broad, and must add that of Professor H. H. Price of Oxford.

Olaf Stapledon, it may be noted in passing, says in *Philosophy and Living* that ". . . in 'mediumistic phenomena' we touch upon the fringe of a vast area of possible experience for the understanding of which we have as yet no adequate concepts."

It may seem to the reader that the opinions quoted against psychical research grossly outweigh those in favour of it. The number of both might be added to: the main point is that those in favour *are* a minority; and the discovery of paramount significance is that the opinions of those against it, when we come to analyse them, are found to be based on a quite primitive psychological foundation which takes control of most human minds directly they set foot on the "enchanted ground" of the entirely unfamiliar. The feat of retaining intellectual poise and a sense of scientific values on this "enchanted ground" is achieved by only a few.

28

WHAT IS SCIENCE?

The Opposition between Science and Rationalism

It will have been noticed that some of the critics quoted above repudiate the study of psychical research in the name of science. They do not make it very clear why it is unscientific to investigate the more unusual faculties of the human being; but some appear to think that the practice of psychical research is *illogical.* Professor Troland compared paranormal phenomena with a perpetual-motion machine, that is to say with something which the laws of nature show to be impossible. Professor Jastrow described the hypothesis of telepathy as "an egregious logical sin." He also said that the study of this subject shows "the weak hold that principle and logic" have gained on the human mind. It is quite common for people to deplore the study of psychical phenomena in a "scientific age," as though science ought to cure us from studying facts which lie outside some arbitrary line. The views of these university professors are by no means unique. The almost universal tendency to smile at the mention of psychical research is alone sufficient to show that most people do not regard it as a field for serious study. In view of such criticisms it may be as well to clear the ground by reminding ourselves of what science is. This has been admirably done by Professor A. N. Whitehead in the first chapter of his book, *Science and the Modern World.*

He reminds us that science arose as a "new colouring of ways of thought," which "had been proceeding slowly for many ages in the European peoples." He says it was ". . . just that slightest change of tone which yet makes all the difference," a change which "to modern minds has resulted in a vehement and passionate interest" in the relation of general principles to irreducible and stubborn facts.

Until the close of the Middle Ages, men did not look on

facts as exemplars of general principles or feel impelled to examine them minutely in order to discover these principles. China, Persia, India, Rome and even Greece did not develop the true scientific spirit of our own time. The very fact that the Greeks were "lucid thinkers and bold reasoners," says Whitehead, militated against it. "Their genius was not so apt for the state of imaginative, muddled suspense which preceeds successful inductive generalisation."

"Science," says Whitehead, "has never shaken off the impress of its origin in the historical revolt of the later Renaissance. It has remained predominantly an anti-rationalist movement based upon a naïve faith. What reasoning it has wanted has been borrowed from mathematics, which is a surviving relic of Greek rationalism following the deductive method. Science repudiates philosophy. In other words, it has never cared to justify or to explain its meaning; and has remained blandly indifferent to its refutation by Hume. Of course the historical revolt was fully justified. It was wanted. It was more than wanted: it was an absolute necessity for healthy progress. The world required centuries of healthy contemplation of irreducible and stubborn facts. It is difficult for men to do more than one thing at a time, and that was the sort of thing they had to do after the rationalistic orgy of the Middle Ages. It was a very sensible reaction; but it was not a protest on behalf of reason."

Again, he says: "The Reformation and the scientific movement were two aspects of the historical revolt which was the dominant intellectual movement of the later Renaissance. The appeal to the origin of Christianity and Francis Bacon's appeal to efficient causes as against final causes were two sides of one movement of thought. Also for this reason Galileo and his adversaries were at hopeless cross-purposes, as can be seen from his *Dialogues on the Two Systems of the World.* Galileo keeps harping on how things happen, whereas his adversaries had a complete theory as to why things happened. Unfortunately the two theories did not bring out the same result. Galileo insists upon 'irreducible and stubborn facts,' and Simplicius, his opponent, brings forward reasons, completely satisfactory at least to himself. It is a great mistake to conceive this

historical revolt as an appeal to reason. On the contrary, it was through and through an anti-intellectualist movement. It was a return to the contemplation of brute fact and it was based on a recoil from the inflexible rationality of medieval thought."

The appeal to brute fact against the arguments of reason, based on fixed presuppositions, is the essence of science. Science opposes IS to MUST BE. Reason is, of course, essential; but it is applied *after* the facts have been ascertained and not *before*. People often say that science is measurement or that science is accuracy. This is to erect means into principle. The primary object of science is to ascertain facts. Its secondary object is to infer general laws from them. Whether or not in ascertaining the facts use is made of measurement or mathematics depends entirely on the nature of the subject-matter. It is not a matter of scientific principle but of common sense or expediency. Non-metrical methods can be just as scientific as metrical if the type of inquiry demands them.

But this is not the whole story. Science also depends on a belief in the intelligibility of nature. "I do not think, however," says Whitehead, "that I have even yet brought out the greatest contribution of Medievalism to the formation of the scientific movement. I mean the inexpugnable belief that every detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a perfectly definite manner exemplifying general principles. Without this belief the incredible labours of scientists would be without hope. It is this instinctive conviction, vividly poised before the imagination, which is the motive power of research—that there is a secret, a secret which can be revealed. How has this conviction been so vividly implanted in the European mind? When we compare this tone of thought in Europe with the attitude of other civilisations when left to themselves, there seems but one source for its origin. It must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah and with the rationality of a Greek philosopher. Every detail was supervised and ordered: the search into nature could only result in the vindication of the faith in rationality."

When psychical research is repudiated in the name of

science, the critic possibly feels that this second principle of science is being undermined. Perhaps that is what Professor Troland was trying to say when he compared paranormal phenomena with perpetual-motion machines. He may have regarded these phenomena as destroying the scheme of scientific order. Telepathy and precognition appear at first sight to be unattached and unassimilable "brute facts." The scientist is placed in a dilemma. He is pledged in the first place to trust in empirical observation. He believes in the second place that all observed facts must fit into a single, ordered scheme. What is he to do when he finds an observed fact which will not fit into any part of his ordered scheme? Nor is it the scientist alone who is faced with this dilemma. The phenomena of psychical research appear to violate even the familiar order known to the man in the street. It was this dilemma which worried Mr. Everard Feilding when he said that if paranormal phenomena were true, he felt as if he must contemplate the possibility that the statue on the Albert Memorial might drop in to tea!

Can phenomena, which show no sign of falling into line with either common or scientific experience, be acknowledged to exist simply because careful observation shows that they occur? Which of the two principles of science is to be sacrificed, the appeal to fact or the belief in order? Should we, on the one hand, say that, whether or not these things *can* occur, experience shows that they *do*? Or, on the other, that, whatever experience shows, reason declares that they *cannot*? It is interesting to observe that when faced with this dilemma (it is only in physical research that the dilemma becomes acute) men of science tend to adopt the latter attitude. The rationalist in them is stronger than the scientist. They take their stand with the opponents of Galileo in unconscious witness to the immutable power of the psychological substructure of human nature.

One might have expected that, to a man endowed with true scientific curiosity, the merest hint of telepathy would act like the scent of battle to a war-horse. But the scientist does not behave in the least like a war-horse. He behaves much more like a mule: neither pushing nor pulling will move him. When the real test comes, he proves himself to

be an *a priori* theorist at heart. Let me give one last example of this. In an obituary notice of the psychologist, Dr. Morton Prince (not to be confused with Walter Franklin Prince) written by Dr. T. W. Mitchell, the following passage occurs. "He was unwilling to admit the supernormal character of any of the phenomena which he regarded as genuine, and believed that they could all be explained in terms of abnormal psychology. He held a theory of the relation of consciousness to the physiological processes of the body which compelled him to deny the possibility of survival 'of consciousness as we empirically know it. . . .'"[1] Theory first; appeal to fact afterwards!

How skin-deep, when we come to look into it, is the hold of scientific empiricism even in this scientific age. Now let us try to gather together the significance of the evidence we have been studying.

[1] *Journal* S.P.R., Vol. xxvi, p. 42.

X

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WHOLE

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WHOLE

Is the Queer Character of Paranormal Phenomena a Legitimate Reason for Rejecting them at Sight? – Are Queer Things Improbable? – How do we Judge the Probable? – Is the Material Order of Things Universal? "Misplaced Centrality" – A Speculation about Another World

WHEN we look back at the evidence cited above, one thing stands out clearly: it hangs together as a whole. Disparate though the individual phenomena may seem at first sight, they manifest a unity when we look deeper. All point towards the existence of a region of the human personality lying behind consciousness, hidden from view. Strange things evidently happen in this region, but not things without order. They are correlated both with one another and with normal happenings. They are not "white elephants" —scandalous interlopers into law and order which it is superstitious even to contemplate. They indeed introduce us into a strange realm; but it is a further hall in the mansion of nature; not an imaginary fairy-land.

After all, if we feel inclined to condemn these phenomena because they are queer, are not many things queer which we accept without a qualm? There is no hard and fast line separating the "normal" from the "paranormal." These are terms of convenience only. The poet with "eye in a fine frenzy rolling" is mentally dissociated, as also is the medium. States of mysticism lead to the heights of religion; yet they are closely connected with various "paranormal" phenomena. Hypnotism, at one time scoffed at as paranormal, has crossed the boundary and is accepted

without a murmur. In fact, the division between "normal" and "paranormal" is perfectly arbitrary.

How easily we crossed the Rubicon when we were considering the evidence for telepathy in Chapter 6. Miss Jephson's cheque and Mr. Constable's five-barred gate, palpable to the senses but non-existent, were "normal" because created by their *own* subconscious minds. But the sentence in Mrs. Field's letter, equally palpable but non-existent, was "paranormal" because the impulse which gave rise to it came from *someone else's* mind. How childish it would be to accept the two first as ordinary psychological happenings but to fling up our hands at the third, crying "superstition and spooks"! We are equally ignorant of the *modus operandi* of all three.

Assuming that the reader has overcome, at least to some extent, the tendency to dismiss the paranormal as rubbish, and is prepared to admit that responsible work has been done which has revealed startling facts, it now remains to collect the threads of the previous chapters and to attempt a brief summary of their significance.

In Chapter 1, some remarks were made about the "unconscious," and it was pointed out that psycho-therapists have made a genuine inroad into human personality beyond the threshold of consciousness and have there made discoveries. But this inroad is mainly at that particular level at which the psychological springs of action are to be found. Psychical research, on the other hand, has attacked the personality at a different level. Genius and mysticism are concerned with a different level again.

On account of the practical importance of psychoanalysis, a great deal of public attention has been directed to it, and a tendency has arisen to regard the whole personality beyond consciousness as consisting of Freudian repressed material, together with certain inherited tendencies. The facts we have dealt with show, however, that this is too narrow a basis. Psycho-pathology has a utilitarian origin: there is much in the personality which lies outside its scope. Psychical research, with fewer workers and less public understanding, has supplemented the work of medical psychologists in an extremely important field. The two studies are complementary—not

separate or opposed. The same dream may contain a Freudian and a telepathic element. The psycho-therapeutist is interested in the first; the psychical investigator in the second. Each notices in the dream the factor which most concerns him; but it would be the height of folly for either to deny the element which is of interest to the other. There is indeed one sense in which the two studies are not quite on a par. The psycho-therapeutist is on the look-out for facts which he can *use*; the psychical investigator for facts which will shed light on the nature of the human being. But this should be no cause for mutual exclusiveness.

In telepathy and precognition we catch a glimpse of something at work in the personality which bears no ordinary relation to space and time; something, also, which is no mere unintelligent "unconscious," but is full of planning and directed effort. Here we meet the claim for intervention by the dead—a claim which cannot be dismissed offhand by any who wish to be guided by empirical evidence rather than by presuppositions.

It is natural to ask why, if the phenomena of psychical research are genuine, they should be so elusive. Why, after six thousand years of civilisation, are we still in doubt about them? Why, if they can be experienced at all, can they not be experienced certainly and at will? Why can we not test them, become familiar with them by daily experience and deal with them in the scientific laboratory? Men of science incline to the view that if they are to be expected to take these phenomena seriously, they must be provided with an experimental technique by means of which they can observe and repeat them at will. They demand that they be put on a par in this respect with ordinary laboratory phenomena. Why is this demand so difficult to meet? Does the difficulty imply that the phenomena in question are really illusory?

The answers to these questions have, I think, been substantially given in the above chapters. Roughly, the situation is an follows. In the physical sciences we are dealing with events directly open to the inspection of the senses. Such events can be accurately and continuously observed and, moreover, by the direct intervention of onr bodies, we can control them and vary their conditions. In

such cases the demand for controllable and repeatable experiments is easily met. Even in the psychological laboratory, where we are dealing with mental and not with physical events, this is fairly true But when we come to events which occur neither in the physical world nor in the conscious mind, the situation is different. Our only means of getting to know about events taking place in the subliminal portion of the personality is by watching for symbolical signals to arrive at consciousness. This is a totally different situation from that obtaining in normal psychology or physics. All we can do is to put the human subject into the psychological state in which experience shows that these signals are likely to occur. That is what we do in hypnosis, automatism or trance. We displace the normal consciousness and allow the deeper levels of the personality to send signals indicating what is passing in them. The main task of psychical research is to induce the right psychological conditions in the most promising types of individual. Its ultimate hope is to control these conditions. At present we are at the state of observation to a considerable extent, groping like explorers on the verge of an unknown continent. The demand for immediate and complete control comparable with that exercised in the physical laboratory is, on the face of it, unreasonable. We must not be dictatorial: our business is to question nature, not to attempt to coerce her.

It turns out, however, that a certain portion of the field of psychical research *is* amenable to the type of experiment the man of science demands. In Chapters 11 to 15, an outline was given of what has been accomplished in this direction. But we must not forget that, satisfactory as these results are, *the more thoroughly we get into contact with the subliminal self, the more spontaneous do the phenomena become.* And hence the more inapplicable is the classical method of scientific research. The further we penetrate inwards from the fringe of the subject, the more the phenomena take on a teleological and hormic character; and this very character is itself one of the things we most wish to observe. In Chapters 17 and 18, for example, the phenomena under observation went so far as to take almost complete control of the situation. It would be absurd to inhibit this spontaneous feature in order to keep the control

entirely in our own hands. One might as well shoot an animal in order to study its habits.

The statistical experiments depend mainly on material which consists of faint, ragged and uncertain images or impulses, which the subjects can conjure up more or less at will. This is, in fact, what the controllability of the experiments depends on. The fact that such experiments have attained success is due, not to the good quality of the material investigated, but to the sensitiveness of the method of detection. The method is like that of working a poor gold-mine with a very efficient method of gold-extraction, and while this is excellent as far as it goes, it does not go far enough. The advantage of complete control is bought at a price, the price of being confined to the perimeter of the subject. There seems little promise that the completely controlled, mathematical method of research will ever lead to the heart of the subject. The very fact that the percipient is required to retain conscious control of the conditions, and to adjust his behaviour to the rules of the experiment, would seem to negative it. We can have the customary type of scientific control at the price of paddling in the shallows.

In any experiment, whether primarily of a statistical kind or not, mathematics do, however, provide an ideal way of dealing with the question of chance. But here, again, we strike a profit-and-loss account. For the satisfactory application of figures, the subject-matter must be of a numerically assessable kind. If chance-figures are to mean anything, they must take into account the salient characteristics of the phenomena, not merely the less important. Where phenomena are rich in qualitative features, this cannot be done; and chance-figures applied to such cases may be more misleading than helpful. Some critics appear to assume that anything not mathematically demonstrated to be beyond the reach of chance may be put down to chance. But it is clear from their mode of criticism that they do this in order that they may put down the qualitative evidence to chance and so escape from having to deal with it. It is surely best in such cases to recognise at once that this kind of argument *is* of an escapist type and to go straight to the root of the matter, namely to the critic's irrational bias.

For where this bias exists, critics are quite capable of being unconvinced by even a mathematical proof. They do not argue about it; they merely shrug their shoulders and turn away. We have cited the two examples of Dr. Coover and Professor Troland in Chapter 27, whose bias overrode the evidence of figures.

But why does anyone, claiming to be imbued with the scientific spirit, wish to escape from the investigation of facts? Is it because these alleged facts are so queer as to justify their dismissal at sight? There are two points with regard to this. Queer people have undoubtedly been attracted by these things: much fraud has been connected with them and much rubbish talked about them. But this does not afford the slightest justification for men of science to ignore them. If there is any prospect of the phenomena being important, it would be their clear duty to separate the truth from the fraud.

Again, it might be said that not only are the people connected with these things queer: the things themselves are queer also—so queer that one can see at a glance that they cannot possibly be true. But we have already seen that there are many queer things which we do not boggle over, and that most things are queer if we look into them deeply enough. What is it about paranormal phenomena which causes people to reject them with such determination, and even with emotion amounting sometimes to panic? I suggest that, deep down beneath all the pretences, evasions and attempted rationalisations, the principal reason is because they lie outside the orbit of the familiar. Do we realise how powerful the grip of the familiar is on our minds? It has been pointed out above; but is it generally realised that if we probe deeply into *anything* it becomes queer and unacceptable to common sense? The things which are familiar seem probable; but they float on the surface; underneath, everything is wild improbability.

Lord Russell brings this out strikingly when talking about matter and our mode of perceiving it. He says: "We have seen that even if physical objects do have an independent existence they must differ very widely from sense-data and can only have a correspondence with sense-data in the same sort of way in which a catalogue has a

correspondence with the thing catalogued. Hence, common sense leaves us completely in the dark as to the true intrinsic nature of physical objects, and if there were good reason to regard them as mental, we could not legitimately reject this opinion merely because it strikes us as strange. The truth about physical objects *must* be strange. It *may* be unattainable, but if any philosopher believes that he has attained it, the fact that what he offers as the truth is strange ought not to be made a ground of objection to his opinion."[1]

We need not trouble about what Lord Russell means by "sense-data." He says that "the truth about physical objects must be strange." Does the non-philosophical reader realise that he is talking about everyday objects which we continually see and touch? What is there strange about them? He says that the truth about them may be unattainable. Does everyone realise that chairs, tables, bricks, etc., which lie all about us, as plain as a pikestaff, are mysterious and strange entities, when we come to analyse them? The deeper we probe, the stranger they become. Does everyone realise that the analysis of sense-perception leads philosophers into the queerest problems and perplexities—that what is apparently obvious and straight-forward to start with becomes "curiouser and curiouser" when we try to reach a fundamental understanding of it? The world about us, so plain that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein," has been made to appear plain by nature's extraordinary cunning. Its ostensible simplicity is specious. We are cozened into accepting it naïvely; and in consequence we form a totally erroneous estimate of what is probable. Automatically, our minds try to reject whatever does not fit in with this smooth order of the familiar.

"That great philosopher Bacon," writes Professor Macneile Dixon, "could not to the last believe that the earth revolved round the sun. The facts were too solidly opposed to such a fancy. It was incredible. The diamond appears the acme of stability, it is, in fact, a whirlpool of furious motion. Who could believe it? What is credible?

[1] *The Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 59–60.

Only the familiar. When the news of the invention of the telephone was reported to Professor Tait, of Edinburgh, he said: 'It is all humbug, for such a discovery is physically impossible.' When the Abbé Moignon first showed Edison's phonograph to the Paris Academy of Sciences, all the men of science present declared it impossible to reproduce the human voice by means of a metal disc, and the Abbé was accused, Sir William Barrett tells us, of having a ventriloquist concealed beneath the table. The thing was unbelievable."[1] If the phenomena of psychical research seem queer, that is no more than we should expect. It should not be held against them.

But there is more to be considered than this. Are these phenomena, perhaps, not merely queer, but inconsistent with the established laws of science? Is there a danger that, if we accept them, we shall sink back into superstition and find ourselves in an Alice-in-Wonderland world in which anything might happen? Shall we have to admit, as Feilding put it, that if these things are true, the statue on the Albert Memorial might one day drop in to tea? Some scientific men appear to think so. Professor Jastrow, for example, said: "Obviously if the alleged facts of psychical research were genuine and real the labours of science would be futile and blind." And William James's biologist friend, said that if the evidence for telepathy were true, scientists ought to band together to keep it concealed.

It is important to be clear on this question, for if these professional men of science are right, psychical research has embarked on a wild-goose chase. Of one thing we may be sure: the established laws of science will stand. Nothing will upset them; and if paranormal phenomena are real, they must be consistent with them. Are they consistent?

Psychical research confronts us with three main branches of evidence, and we can say of them all that they differ in a startling way from both common and scientific experience. (1) Evidence that knowledge can be shared by the conscious minds of persons whose bodies are separated in space, while no intra-spatial action is taking place between these bodies.

[1] *The Human Situation*, p. 429.

(2) Evidence that non-inferential knowledge can be acquired of events which have not yet happened. (3) Evidence that messages come to us from the dead, which is exceedingly difficult to explain on *any* hypothesis which does not go immensely far beyond common views about the nature of human personality. A fourth mystery hovers in the background. There is evidence, not as good as could be wished, but still by no means negligible, that novel and peculiar physical effects can take place in the vicinity of a living human body which is in a particular psycho-physical state. This latter phenomenon belongs to a somewhat different category from the first three, having more to do with physiology and physics. For the moment we will consider the first three only.

Supposing telepathy and non-inferential foreknowledge to be facts, and supposing also that messages purporting to come from the dead really do so (in the sense that surviving human minds have something to do with them), would any of these phenomena contradict an established law of nature or any established fact? I suggest that the answer is, No. They only *seem* to contradict them because we have made a certain unjustifiable assumption. The apparent contradiction arises because we have decided that anything which happens at all must happen *in the world-order with which we are familiar*. Speaking in a rough and ready way, if we admit a region *outside* the familiar world-order for paranormal events to happen in, there is no longer any reason to suppose that they contradict or interfere with the laws of nature. Of course, by "outside" I do not mean spatially outside. I mean that there must be an "elsewhere" in the sense of some locus for events which is independent of the space-time-matter world. It is impossible to express this "elsewhereness" without using spatial language.

Take telepathy. The view outlined in Chapter 7 was to the effect that information known to A in one place can be shared by B in another place without anything happening in the intervening space, because A's subliminal self and B's subliminal self enter into some cognitive relation with one another (perhaps a permanent relation). This fact is signalled to B's consciousness by means of some created sense-image or the like. The two subliminal selves dodge,

as it were, the space difficulty by simply not existing in space. Where are they, then? They exist, but are without any spatial extension, which alone enables a thing to be in space. Their cognitive relation is not the kind of event which has to take place or can take place in space. But, since it does take place (or since it exists), there must be an order of existence which is independent of space. This is what I mean by an "elsewhere."

Similarly, with regard to precognition, information known to A at one time can be shared by B (or possibly by A himself) at another time because A's subliminal self and B's subliminal self are in a certain kind of non-temporal cognitive relation with one another; and this fact is signalled to B's consciousness by some created sense-image or the like. The two subliminal selves dodge, as it were, the time difficulty by simply not existing in time. When are they, then? They exist, but have no temporal characteristics; that is all. Their cognitive relation is not the kind of event which has to take place in time. Perhaps it should not be spoken of as an event at all, but rather as some type of non-temporal existent. Even the sense in which it "exists" may be incapable of definition. Yet it is owing to something "happening" or "being" in the subliminal selves that precognition is due. There is a "locus" of "happening" or "being" which is not temporal, at least in our meaning of the term. Language is clearly not competent to deal with the facts presented.

Of course all this does not solve the difficulties of precognition. The "cognitive event" in the subliminal self may be neither an event nor cognitive in the customary meanings of the terms. Extra-sensory faculty may result from the circumstance that subliminal selves are neither singular nor plural, neither one nor many in their nature, but simply inconceivable. I am merely pleading for an "elsewhere" in the sense indicated above in which things can exist which are not comprehended by the familiar world. This idea does seem to be conceivable and to carry the important corollary—the *very* important corollary, as it seems to me—that the familiar world-order is a limited, highly specialised affair, and not universal. I would even venture to suggest that this is one of the most important

conceptions that psychical research is bringing to light. It is an idea to ponder over more and more. Nature does not come to an end where our senses cease to register it and our minds become incapable of dealing with it. It is vital to grasp this if one is to get one's perspective right. In denying paranormal phenomena because they are unfamiliar, we are like a person who denies that there can be such a thing as a duck-billed platypus in Australia because he never meets one in the English countryside.

I doubt whether at present it is much use asking what the fundamental telepathic relation consists in; we need first to know more about the nature of the subliminal self. A new conception cannot be expressed until there is current coin in terms of which to express it; but it seems possible that the fundamental telepathic and precognitive relations may be standing characteristics of selfhood rather than "events." What we call a telepathic or precognitive event may be the signal to consciousness which occasionally lights up a permanent state.

Whether it be a permanent state or a subliminal event, it exists "elsewhere" and does not interfere, directly, with the familiar order. It is only *signalled* into the familiar order. But it may interfere indirectly, as when a person takes action on the strength of telepathic or precognitive knowledge. In Chapter 8 some examples of this were cited.

With regard to physical phenomena, a very strange and at present nebulous possibility may here be mentioned. If the reported physical phenomena of psychical research should be certainly confirmed, it might conceivably have to be admitted that, through the physiology of the human organism, some interaction can take place between the one order and the other. It is impossible to forecast what this might entail. Instead of some physical substance supplied by the medium (or in addition to it), there might be observed a direct interaction between a causal and a non-causal order. Perhaps we should find events occasionally taking place in the physical world which were correlated with one another, yet not causally connected. This, to a mind brought up on causality, would seem the essence of the irrational. It would, in fact, be just what the ordinary person means by a "miracle." Any concrete evidence for such happenings

would be met with inflexible incredulity. Yet it is not, in the widest sense of the word, unreasonable to suppose that such a state of affairs might exist. The incredulity would be based on an instinctive rebellion against something which violates custom; not on any knowledge we possess that such a state of affairs is impossible. Why should custom never be violated? If we face up to this question, we shall find that at the bottom of it all lies an intense reluctance to admit that anything can exist which is substantially different from what *we* are used to, and can comprehend.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that Prof. J. B. Rhine, whose experiments were described in Chapter 12, claims repeated success with an experiment in dice-throwing which, if confirmed, would appear to confront us with this very situation. The work is, however, at too early a stage to be entered into here.

To sum up—in telepathy, a person whose body is in one place can have knowledge of what is in the mind of a person whose body is in another place, without any physical action taking place in the intervening space. Action in the physical world can, moreover, be taken as a result of knowledge so acquired. Thus, something can happen in the ordinary world as the result of telepathy, which would not happen otherwise.

In precognition, the situation is similar if time be substituted for space. Therefore it has here been argued that the order of existence with which our senses make us familiar is not the whole. There is an "elsewhere" in which the order of things is different. We do not come across this "elsewhere" by exploring the external world. A little reflection shows why we could not expect to. We become aware of the external world by means of our bodily sense-organs, which have been specially developed to reveal it and nothing else. It is only by looking into the personality of man that we discover the existence of this "elsewhere." The living human being is, in fact, the nexus for interaction between the physical order and this other order, which we have called the "elsewhere." This other order we have regarded as a further chamber in the mansion of nature; not as a supernatural world.

Once the idea has been grasped that our organs of sense-

perception are narrowly specialised to serve biological and practical ends; that our normal consciousness is also specialised and largely focussed on perception; that our body is highly specialised; that, in fact, as a psycho-physical being, the human individual represents a special adaptation to a special world, it becomes easier to contemplate an "elsewhere," that is to say a continuation of the order of existence beyond the familiar. There is nothing in the least absurd in the suggestion that nature does not come to an end where our senses cease to register it, even when they are assisted by various instruments. There is nothing absurd in the suggestion that much of nature may be inaccessible to our senses *in principle.* This suggestion, nevertheless, arouses intense opposition. We saw in Chapters 26 and 27 what extraordinary forms this opposition takes; nor is it by any means confined to men of science. It is broadly human. With few exceptions, philosophers, divines, literary men, men of business and the general public share it. They betray emotion; they wander as if dazed on some enchanted ground; they mis-state facts; they use absurd arguments; they wriggle in an attempt to escape. This is an extremely interesting and important phenomenon, because obviously it is a vital factor to be taken into account by anyone who is bent on the discovery of truth.

In this resistance to paranormal evidence we see a common human tendency writ large, the tendency to exalt the familiar and to reject and despise the unfamiliar. The tendency is ubiquitous and immensely powerful. It ranges from the habit of ridiculing foreigners to such opposition as was once accorded to the views of Copernicus. To some extent it showed itself when Einstein presented his Relativity Theory. In spite of two or three centuries of "free inquiry" by science, people are still not prepared to admit the possibility of anything radically different from that to which they are accustomed. That this tendency is in essence psychological was shown by the examples which have been given. I suggest that it is largely a result of biological adaptation. It is a mistake to think that biological evolution merely adapted man's body to his environment. Adaptation goes much deeper than that. Nature

can influence us from within as well as from without. We are made to "feel in our bones" convictions which serve the interests of practical life. False beliefs of a certain kind, because simple and useful, may be of great service to the man of action, provided they do not falsify any truth it is vital for him to know. But when false beliefs are carried over into the search for truth, they are simply disastrous.

The reference to Copernicus is apt in this connection. Before the time of Copernicus the planet Earth was supposed to occupy the centre of the universe, because that all-important creature, Man, lived on it. Copernicus threw the celestial universe into a new and far wider perspective. He opened up a tremendous vista, which outraged everything familiar; and his views were consequently resisted. I would go so far as to suggest that we are coming in sight of a similar situation to-day: but this time on an even larger scale. It is not the planet Earth whose centrality is this time in question but the material universe as a whole. We are in the Ptolemaic age with regard to the world of our senses. Psychical research promises to inaugurate a new and vaster Copernican revolution, in which the material universe will be dethroned from its central position and reduced to one of provincial status. The opposition accorded to the paranormal to-day is of exactly the same kind as that accorded to the views of Copernicus in the past. Now, as then, reason, based on specious assumptions is opposed to fact, and people react just as they did in Galileo's time. The empirical principle of science is thrown to the winds. IS goes to the wall and CANNOT BE wins. That is why in the present pages I have ventured throughout to stress the importance of appealing to facts.

But this psychological resistance to the unfamiliar does not seem to account entirely for the public attitude towards the paranormal. There is an intellectual superstructure built on the psychological foundation. One can see this because the resistance to paranormal facts becomes stronger with the growth of scientific knowledge. By establishing the laws of nature and by clarifying and mapping out the external world, science has enhanced the sense of its reality and importance. It has enhanced its prestige and

established it as the universal source of explanation. "Materialism" increases in a scientific age because the psychological tendency to magnify the importance of the familiar is intellectually reinforced.

No doubt it will be pointed out that the tendency to reject the paranormal is by no means universal. On the contrary, it will be said, many people accept it far too readily and without adequate evidence. This is true. It must be admitted that there is a double tendency in the human mind, one of acceptance and one of rejection. Besides the tendency to explain everything in terms of the familiar, there is an opposite tendency in some minds to seek out exceptions to the familiar and to exalt the marvellous—a tendency to seek after sensations, to exaggerate rumours, and generally to believe what seems desirable. It seems to me that while the tendency to reject the unfamiliar is universal and mainly psychological, the type of intellectual belief which is superimposed on this foundation is largely dependent on a person's character. A serious mind, bent on a search for meanings, and trying to make sense of the world, develops an intellectual superstructure which reinforces the primitive foundation; and the tendency to reject all that cannot be clearly understood becomes very strong. A looser, less serious and perhaps more emotional type of mind finds no particular difficulty in accepting things which do not fit together in an intelligible pattern, and develops an intellectual superstructure in keeping with its emotional tendencies. But the primitive foundation is still there. Notice how the latter type of mind tends to interpret paranormal phenomena on materialistic lines.

All this goes to make up a person's estimate of antecedent probability and improbability. The man who feels impelled to deny anything he cannot at once explain will fly to theory before evidence and will base his estimate of what is probable on the theory he holds. He will be unconvinced by brute facts unless they are of an overwhelming kind. He will turn his back on unwelcome facts and ignore them as long as he can, saying that they are outrageously improbable. This is the position taken up with regard to the paranormal by some men of science to-day. Through and through, their judgment is based on

a priori considerations. I would beg the reader to reflect on this situation and not to thrust it hastily aside. It is of the very greatest importance for the apprehension of truth. Our evidence shows that there is a point beyond which few people are prepared to carry the scientific method of experiment and observation. When they reach this point, they no longer behave in a balanced manner. They struggle, like fish out of water, to return to their native element, the familiar. As a result, the researches of science are being pursued, unwittingly, inside a ring-fence. Could any fact be more important than this?

It may not matter for most of the practical purposes of life. Engineers, technicians, workers in applied science, can hold what philosophy of the universe they choose: they do not need to go outside the ring-fence. But nothing could be more vital than that the true facts about man's nature should be known to those who teach philosophy or religion or plan the future of society. And to know these true facts—to suspect them, even—involves looking beyond the ring-fence. Any attempt to improve the lot of mankind which ignores the basic facts about man's personality is doomed to failure. The illusion that the familiar alone is the real; that the corner of the universe visible to us is the whole; that a specialised phase of the human being is its entirety—these beliefs create a totally false perspective. If I might venture to modify a phrase coined by A. N. Whitehead, I should call this false perspective the Fallacy of Misplaced Centrality; for it consists in the illusion that what we are familiar with constitutes the centre of everything. It may seem over-bold to suggest that the majority of people, by adopting this fallacy, are wrong. But majorities can be wrong. Everyone at one time believed that the sun revolved round the earth. Also, in this case, the origin of the fallacy makes its ubiquity intelligible. The fallacy is imposed upon us by nature; and, as far as practical life is concerned, it is a fiction of the greatest utility. We *must* be adapted to our world in mind as well as in body. Yet, if we wish to attain even an inkling of the truth about our own nature and cosmic situation, we *must* escape from this fallacy.

Only something very strange—only some ingression of

truth from beyond the ring-fence—could reveal how thorough our mental adaptation to the familiar world is. The ring-fence calls to mind the Heaviside layer of the earth's atmosphere, which reflects electro-magnetic radiation back to earth. There is a mental "Heaviside layer," reflecting human thought back to the practical world to which it is adapted. The slight probings we have made beyond this layer reveal at one stroke that the domain of the real extends beyond the range of ordinary cognitive faculty, and that human personality comprises a vast hinterland in virtue of which it has part and lot in this extended order. What could be of more vital importance? Yet so strong is the chain with which nature binds us to familiar things that all this is generally regarded as trivial! People laugh at the mere mention of it. It sounds incredible; but the truth is that when we try to acquire a fundamental understanding of our own nature, we are hoodwinked and placed in blinkers. We are invited to turn for information to the external world; while the source of information which holds all the principal secrets is the personality of man.

Not for nothing were the words γνῶθι σεαυτόν inscribed in the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Goethe made a remark which is remarkably appropriate to the present discussion. He described the advice, "Know Thyself," as "a singular requisition with which no man complies, or indeed ever will comply. Man is by all his senses and efforts directed to externals—to the world about him." This is precisely what we have been arguing. It is to externals that we turn for explanations; to theories of "emergence," for example, when we wish to find an explanation for life and mind—emergence from matter. Nature urges us to do so; and meanwhile we miss the principal avenue to knowledge, the human being in its living completeness.

There is another factor which has contributed to the rejection of the paranormal. Centuries of Christian thought have impressed on the mind of Europe the idea that the universe is divided in two by a line running across the middle. On one side of this line is the Natural; on the other side the Supernatural. It had always been believed that the two halves interacted with one another

under the personal supervision of God. With the rise of science, natural explanations and natural law gained steadily at the expense of supernatural, and scientists took a pride in driving superstition and supernature together out of the field. So strong, however, has been the impress of this dualism that it has left its mark on the scientific thought of to-day. Of course it has not survived unmodified. The supernatural half of the dichotomy has nearly faded away; but the natural half is still regarded as if it were one member of a duality, and the line which once divided the natural from the supernatural still persists and surrounds what is called "nature" like the rim of a coin. Scientific writers show this by the way they speak of "nature": the aftermath of the old dualism declares itself. These writers are always emphasising the importance of the appeal to "nature." On the cover of the scientific journal *Nature* is printed a quotation from Wordsworth: "To the solid ground of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye." One gets the impression that men of science congratulate themselves on having gone to nature for their information instead of to some rival firm. They speak as if there were a possible alternative way of getting to know things. In this can be seen the ghost of supernature still haunting their imaginations. This is surely one reason why men of science are so averse to studying the facts about human personality which we have been discussing. In a confused way they seem to think that these facts are not "natural"; they scent their old enemy, the "supernatural," lurking in psychical research, and are afraid it may return, swamp the world with superstition and upset "natural law." All this shows a clandestine survival of the medieval type of thought, which was based on the idea of a sharp boundary marking the limit of nature.

If the evidence of psychical research shows anything, it shows that the phenomena it studies are not "supernatural." They are "natural" in the sense of belonging to an ordered whole. They are evidently governed by different laws from those which govern the physical world; but there is no reason to suppose that they are separated from the latter by any intrinsic boundary. There is probably continuity, the apparent sharp division being the

result of the limited character of our sense-perception. We should regard paranormal phenomena as constituting an extension of the sphere of nature; but "nature" with an extended meaning. "Natural" and "Supernatural" are terms so full of unfortunate associations that it would be a good thing if we could discard them both. We need to think just of Reality or Existence or That which Is—whatever term you choose by which to denote the Whole. As commonly used, the term "Nature" has come to mean only that restricted portion of reality which our senses show us. On the other hand, "Nature" is a very convenient term, and has been freely used in its current sense in the above pages. It would be difficult to do without it; but its power to mislead is unfortunately great. We must extend its meaning a great deal in order to give paranormal phenomena a place within it.

A tremendous shock is given to familiar ideas by the suggestion that communications may reach us from the dead. Significantly, this shock seems to be just as great to the religious as to the irreligious. Perhaps this suggestion imparts an even greater shock to psychological habit than does precognition. We saw that these messages cannot be taken entirely at their face value. Some are poor, stupid and unconvincing; some are probably false, and it is clear that all contain psychological subtleties. Suppose, however, that we are obliged to come to the conclusion that in some direct or indirect sense the minds of the dead are really concerned in some of these messages; we not only receive a shock, we are also confronted by many problems. How, for example, could there be a transition from this life to a totally different life which did not produce helpless bewilderment?

I do not intend to discuss this problem at length: but it looks as if it might be connected with a remarkable fact which our evidence has disclosed. As soon as normal consciousness is displaced from its position of control, sense-imagery is produced on a prolific scale. So common is this feature that examples are scarcely necessary. Most mediums see vivid and life-like scenes, as we saw in Chapters 16, 18, 19, 20 and 21, the case of Mrs. Willett in Chapter 18 being one of the most striking. Hypnosis produces extraordinarily

complete and convincing sense-imagery. So do certain drugs and anæsthetics. In the out-of-the-body cases, cited in Chapter 22, a similar thing happened. Dreams are another example. This sense-imagery, so prolific when consciousness is displaced, occurs also when consciousness is normal, or nearly so; but then it is rare, partial and comparatively inconspicuous. The latter phenomenon was illustrated in Chapter 6, and, occurring like this, it is called a "hallucination." I suggest that there is no intrinsic difference between the sensory hallucination of waking life and the pervasive imagery which occurs in states of conscious displacement. The difference is one of degree; not of kind. We are not now considering *why* sense-imagery takes the various forms it does: the psycho-analyst is more concerned with this aspect. We are interested in *how* this sense-imagery comes to be generated and in the extraordinary magnitude which it can assume.

The idea I wish to suggest in barest outline is that sensory hallucinations, which occur on rare occasions in ordinary life, may increase to a vast extent when the psycho-physical relations governing normal conscious existence are relaxed. What, during normal life, is no more than a momentary interpolation into perception may conceivably grow after death until it monopolises the whole field, and can provide a whole world of surroundings. Difficulties indeed arise. Would not such wholesale "hallucinations" be no more than wild, uncontrolled dreams? Not necessarily, I think. They might conceivably settle down into something orderly and permanent. But, even then, would not the percipient be isolated in a world of his own? Not if a whole group of minds were telepathically united in a common image-making theme. That two or more minds could be so telepathically impressed as to share a "hallucinatory" world, each perceiving it from exactly his own point of view, seems at first sight an utterly fantastic idea. But certain cases of telepathic hallucination (omitted in this book for lack of space) show that something of the kind, in a small way, actually occurs. Sometimes these visions are shared by two or more persons.[1] The minuteness of detail

[1] See *Apparitions*, p. 285 below.

and the correlation in these cases is quite extraordinary. If we were to conceive that the dead might create a complete environment in this way and share it in common, possibly in groups only, one can see that environments might arise which would be in keeping more or less with those of the physical world. This would provide continuity, and transition to a higher life. We are prone to think that any such self-created world would be entirely unreal; but it need not be so if its theme were provided by some relatively independent reality. The theme would be, in our language, "psychological" and the common property of a group of subliminal selves. After all, it is extremely difficult to maintain that our present environment, as perceived by us, is entirely independent of ourselves. It must have a considerable subjective element, which we supply. The independent factor—"physical substance" or some causal agency—what is it? What do we know about its intrinsic nature? Sir Arthur Eddington goes far in emphasising our ignorance of it. He says: "But according to our conclusions, the laws of physics are a property of the frame of thought in which we represent our knowledge of the objective content, and thus far physics has been unable to discover any laws applying to the objective content itself."[1]

Why cry "fantastic nonsense" at the suggestion of a seemingly objective world whose independent factor is a psychological creator of sense-imagery? The everyday world we live in is an enigma beneath the surface, and our mode of perceiving it might almost be described as a fantastic miracle. Is there not, in this seemingly wild suggestion, an inkling of how an extra-material world might be possible which is neither a second material world on the one hand nor a pure, subjective creation of our own on the other? In any case, neither psychologists nor philosophers appear to have devoted sufficient attention to sensory hallucinations, normal or paranormal.[2]

Progress in psychical research has been slow on account of an almost universal lack of interest and the presence of profound misconceptions. It is likely to continue to be

[1] *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 217.

[2] See the end of Chapter 6.

slow so long as these persist. The percentage of spontaneous cases of telepathy and precognition which reach a satisfactory evidential standard is very small because few people take the precautions needed to make them so. Large numbers of cases probably occur, but are lost as evidential material. To make a case evidential, it is necessary to write it down accurately at the time of its occurrence, sign and date it and get any available witnesses to attest it. Even if it is not written down at the time, it may have value if it is told at once to others. The written account should be sent to the Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research, 31, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1. In the event of privacy being desirable, names and addresses can be concealed from the public. If the case is one of apparent precognition, the account should be written, signed, dated (with time) and witnessed before the event is fulfilled. Inaccuracies in fulfilment, partial or even total, should not be regarded as disappointing, since the dream or impression may be derived from mixed sources. The study of inaccuracies is, in fact, very informative. More well-evidenced cases of different kinds are needed: by comparing them with one another useful information can be gained.

Some sensitives, who possess good telepathic or other faculties, will not use them for the purpose of advancing knowledge on this subject. This is a great pity and, in view of the value of this information, is surely unjustifiable.

For anything like rapid progress to be made in understanding the depths of human personality, properly organised centres are required in which suitable subjects could be trained and investigators could co-operate in research. It is quite likely that subjects, besides being individually selected on account of an innate faculty, might have to live sheltered lives which included freedom from anxiety and periods of complete quiet. This would, in some way, resemble the training for religious contemplation; but the end in view would be different. Religious contemplatives have said over and over again that at a certain point in their training paranormal faculties appear. These they disregard as distractions from their goal of mystical union. The object of not disregarding them at the present day is that the materialistic philosophy is spreading more and

more, and if it is false, as these facts imply, it is of the greatest importance that that should be generally known. Otherwise the world seems likely to destroy itself in an orgy of materialism. It is at the present time doing its best. The appeals of established religion are clearly proving ineffective in stemming the tide.

The experimental work of psychical research is, however, already beginning to have a slight effect on scientific minds. Far more could be done if public interest were aroused and if even quite modest funds were available for research. Above all, able and intelligent workers are required: but the first necessity is for the true character of psychical research to be understood and appreciated.

30

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND RELIGION

Is a Future Life necessarily Religious? – The Far-reaching Importance of Background

WHAT significance has psychical research for religion? Broadly, I think, the answer is that directly it has none but indirectly a great deal. By "psychical research" I mean psychical research and not spiritualism. The distinction has been brought out in Chapter 4, but needs to be repeatedly emphasised, on account of the persistent tendency to confuse the two.

One section of Spiritualism is confessedly a religion, with churches up and down the country; and, in consequence, some people seem to think vaguely that psychical research must be one of the new religions. There is no need at this stage of our inquiry to point out that it is not a religion but a branch of science whose business it is to inquire into the nature of human personality.

What is the indirect significance of psychical research for religion? Let us first ask another question. Supposing we were obliged to admit that there is a future life of a finite kind, what significance would this have for religion? Or, putting the question in other words, need a future life be necessarily religious?

When speaking of a future life, the finite type of existence which psychical research appears to point to, must be clearly distinguished from the immortality which is the goal of the mystic and which consists in the attainment of union with the divine. The latter *is* essentially religious: in fact, it is scarcely too much to say that it forms the basis of religion, properly so called. But would a finite existence in some other phenomenal world be intrinsically religious? The tendency of European thought during nearly two thousand years has been to say Yes; any kind of life after death is *ipso facto* religious. Heaven, Hell, Purgatory,

Paradise—every conception, in fact, of life after death is a religious conception. This view, the inheritance of Christian tradition, causes religious orthodoxy to look with horror on accounts of a future life given by mediums. It may well be that most of these accounts are not to be accepted at their face value: the problem of mediumistic communications is subtle and complex and suggests the existence of much psychological machinery behind the scenes. But, supposing *some* finite life after death to be a fact, is there any reason why it should be a religious state? It has been frequently stressed that telepathy and precognition give us glimpses of an extended realm of *nature.* Why should not a future life be another type of natural finite existence? If this were the case, should we be obliged to feel that the sublime conception of immortality had been negatived by it or dragged in the mud? There is a widespread feeling that we should.

Here is an example from the pen of a writer whose views on religion are entitled to great respect. Dr. W. R. Inge writes as follows in *The Philosophy of Plotinus*[1]: "Ghost-stories have no attraction for the Platonist. He does not believe them, and would be very sorry to have to believe them. The kind of immortality which 'psychical research' endeavours to establish would be for him a negation of the only immortality which he desires or believes in. The difference between the two hopes is fundamental. Some men are so much in love with what Plotinus would call the lower soul-life, the surface consciousness and surface-experience which make up the content of our sojourn here as known to ourselves, that they wish, if possible, to continue it after their bodies are mouldering in the grave. Others recognise that this lower soul-life is a banishment from the true home of the Soul, which is in a supra-temporal world, and they have no wish to prolong the conditions of their probation after the probation itself is ended, and we are quit of our 'body of humiliation'."

Of course it is obvious that "the difference between the two hopes is fundamental." But Dr. Inge says that that kind of immortality which psychical research "endeavours

[1] Vol. ii, p. 96.

to establish" would be, for the Platonist, a "*negation* of the only immortality which he desires or believes in." The italics are mine. He evidently regards any finite type of existence after death as *excluding* the Platonist's immortality. Why should it exclude it? If it is possible to pass from this present finite life to immortality, why not from any other? Why is it assumed that we are faced with two mutually exclusive alternatives? Evidently because, once more, of the powerful effect of the philosophy of natural-supernatural dualism. So deeply is this philosophy embedded in Western thought that it is unconsciously assumed that if we pass away from this present world we must pass at once into a *religious* sphere. Any type of existence we enter by death must be religious; and since one religious type of existence excludes another, it will not do to admit that we pass into any life of an unexalted kind. The evidence for this must be fought in the interests of true immortality. Incidentally, we can see the effect here of the "Heaviside layer." The issue has become one of beliefs and wishes; not one of empirical evidence.

But suppose that at death we do not leave the "natural realm" at all; or, suppose, rather, that no hard and fast line separates the "natural" from the "supernatural"; the mutual exclusiveness of the two kinds of future existence then disappears. After all, the idea that dying does not launch us into a religious sphere is quite simple when once we have grasped the idea that "nature" need not come to an end where it ceases to be visible. Of course, for all we know, finite extra-terrestial life might be capable of taking many forms and of existing on many different levels; and in some of them the approach to a religious state might be much easier than it is here. The point is that Dr. Inge's protest appears to rest on the assumption that there is a hard and fast line separating the "natural," finite and secular world from the "supernatural," infinite and religious; and that this line is traversed at death.

The views of immortality presented by Christian orthodoxy on the one hand and by Christian mysticism on the other seem to be inconsistent with one another. The first supposes that death plunges us immediately from a mortal into an immortal state; the second that an immortal

state is that condition of being which is acquired by discipline and contemplation and by climbing, so to speak, the rungs of the ladder of personality. It is stated by religious contemplatives that through such discipline and training, immortality in this true sense can be attained to some extent even here and now. How is it conceivable that the mere accident of bodily death could achieve all that such training is needed to accomplish? What meaning would there be in spiritual progress if it could? The whole conception of religious mysticism—indeed, the view that the present world is a "vale of soul-making" rather than an end in itself—goes by the board if the fact of death, and not the attainment of spiritual purity and enlightenment, is accepted as the portal to immortality. The philosophy of natural-supernatural dualism is, in fact, inconsistent with the mystical view of religion; while the view that "nature" extends into the life beyond physical death is consistent with it. The traditional conception of the "supernatural" has now become a stumbling block in the way of any reconciliation between science and religion. Thus, while Dr. Inge's position might command considerable sympathy if the alternatives he opposes were really mutually exclusive, there seems to be no valid ground for supposing that they are.

But the main significance of psychical research for religion lies in its promise to reveal a much wider background of thought than that provided by current scientific philosophy. The Anglican Church has commented, up to a point, on the significance which it considers that psychical research and spiritualism have for Christianity in a Report made to a Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion held at Lambeth Palace in July and August, 1920. A committee was appointed to "consider and report upon the Christian faith in relation to Spiritualism." It would have been better if psychical research and spiritualism had been more clearly kept apart, but the committee did recognise the distinction between "the investigation of the phenomena of human consciousness . . . carried out notably by the Society for Psychical Research" and "the religious cults and practices which have been created on the basis of what is believed to have been discovered and known as

Spiritualism." A second committee was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1940 with a similar object in view, but its report has not so far been published. Briefly, the earlier Report recognised the existence of telepathy and of the subliminal self and the evidence pointing towards communication from the dead. With regard to the latter, the difficulties of proof were emphasised, and the public, it was recommended, should be warned against a blind acceptance of paranormal phenomena without the exercise of reason and will. The Report was balanced and reasonable as far as it went; but according to our present analysis of the situation, it did not bring out the main significance of psychical research for religion.

To see this, we must ask what is chiefly sapping the efficacy of religion in Europe to-day. The brief answer seems to be that, in so far as religion depends upon a belief in other-worldly realities, it has ceased to carry conviction or to invoke a sense of reality. It has lost its grip on the intellect. People acknowledge the validity of Christian ethics; but they try to harness them to a Religion of Man, because they no longer believe in any higher power. The reason for this is that science has entirely changed our outlook on the universe and our views about the origin and nature of man. The background of thought is totally different from what it was when Christian dogmas were formulated, and the meaning of dogmas depends on the nature of the background. A proposition in any age has to be interpreted in terms of the prevailing background of thought. To take the central dogma of the Christian faith —that Jesus is the Son of God—this, twenty centuries ago, could be interpreted almost literally. It provoked the question: Is it *true*? To-day it provokes the question: What does it *mean*? The change is due to a changed background of thought. Since those far-off days, science has exalted our conception of nature and has imbued our minds with the idea of the ubiquity and efficacy of the forces of nature. It has discovered the vastness of space and the minuteness of our little planet, shown causal law at work on every hand, traced our emergence from the brutes, and displaced man and his world from the central position which he once fancied they occupied. Thus, the whole perspective is

different from what it was when the universe was thought to centre about one human and divine family. A proposition which seemed to be almost literally true in the earlier epoch recedes into a region of myth in the later. Psychologists now speak of the other-worldly hopes and beliefs of religion as projections from the mind of man made when it was passing through its earlier stages of development—myths which have served their usefulness and are now outworn.

Yet, the protagonists of Christianity continue to state their religion in terms of the mental background which was universal when Christianity began. They indeed make common ground with the scientific humanists; but that is about the project of making a better place of *this* world. The gulf between the other-worldly position, which is essential to religion, and that which has arisen out of the study of science is becoming wider and wider. The other-worldly part of religion is more and more coming to be looked upon as a cultural survival to be labelled and stored in a museum.

But remember that science up to now has been exploring almost entirely the *external* world. Look into the human individual—look into man himself, and immediately the perspective changes. Psychology is beginning to do so, but so far has not probed deeply beneath the surface. Psychical research has gone a little deeper, and what do we see? The sharp boundary assigned by science to "nature" at once begins to soften and fade. The bodily senses (which show us the external world) are evidently not showing us everything. There *is* another world: or, rather, there is more of this one: or, again, perhaps it is more correct to say that this world is only a portion of what exists. We have only explored a little way, as the examples given in the above chapters show: and yet the most extraordinary and unexpected things have begun to show themselves. Gradually, as we examine the little evidence we have with close attention, the truth begins to dawn: the perspective begins to reshape itself: the new background of thought begins to form. The world revealed by the senses, explore it as we will with ingenious instruments and mathematical technique, is bounded *in principle*. The

study of the human being reveals more than the human being itself: it shows things happening which are different in *kind* from those things which happen in the world of sense-perception. Thus, the beginning of a new world-perspective is coming into view in which religion and science might, conceivably, make contact with one another in the same intellectual field. This, as I see it, is the chief significance which psychical research has for religion. Whether organised religion will be prepared to welcome such a new perspective, or to effect the reinterpretation of its dogmas in terms of it in the way which the present situation demands, is another question. No doubt a massive inertia lies in the way. The following passage from the pen of a present-day churchman is pertinent. "It will hardly be possible," he says, "to revive religion in this country if a tenacious obscurantist spirit is allowed to govern the decisions of the church. The worst danger to religion is a closed mind. Men trying to understand the deepest problems of life and death and immortality cannot in the twentieth century be expected to regard as beyond the reach of question formulas adopted by fallible Greek theologians in the fifth. They will not allow that Christian thought has been incapable of progress since the year 451. The newer generations growing up will not be persuaded to accept that view. The congregations in hundreds of our parish churches refuse to accept it. Biblical scholars and students refuse to accept it. School teachers refuse to accept it. Professors of Divinity refuse to accept it. Even the bishops as a whole are not quite sure that they can accept it any longer. While the spirit of ecclesiasticism clings still to the 'idol of tradition,' pays curious homage to the shade of Becket, labours with Newman to magnify the office and the authority of the priest, the unrest in religion increases. The movement of the modern mind goes on. And this movement is not stopped or even impressed by the assertion that these dogmas must be infallible and faultless because they have been taught and believed in *semper, ubique, ab omnibus* since the organisation of the Church began."[1]

[1] Erasmian, *The Unrest in Religion*, pp. 102–3.

Increasing knowledge means an ever-changing world-perspective on which religion, if it is to survive, must somehow keep its hold. As Rudolf Otto put it, there must be a "fringe of religious world-theory" without which religion is inconceivable. It is that fringe which to-day is lacking. The Church, at least the Anglican and Protestant sections of it, seems to be turning its back on this problem—indeed on all the problems of other-worldly religion—and concentrating on social reform. It has been said with some aptness that Christianity is becoming the stalking-horse of social reform. Yet all the time it is on the question of the transcendence by man of this present world that the very existence of religion depends. How can religion flourish if this question is tacitly left in the background? F. C. S. Schiller said a long time ago: "The generality of mankind do not care enough about their future to welcome a belief which would make it really necessary to look far ahead, and they do not want to care about it. So it is extremely convenient to leave the future life in the realm of vague speculation, to be believed in when desired and to be disregarded when belief would suggest unpleasant reflections, in order to avoid regarding it as a fact to be steadily and consistently kept in sight."[1] But is it wise for the Church also to adopt this attitude? The intellect of man is probing deep. May not a half-belief kept somewhere in the shadows one day expire altogether, and Christian orthodoxy find itself in the museum?

We hear to-day little about immortality but much about the Church and the planning of Britain. Might one not have expected a very different attitude? Might one not have expected relentless war between the Church and the upholders of materialistic humanism? Would it not have been natural for the Church to insist that the Kingdom of Heaven is a spiritual state and not a state of society to be some day achieved in this world; that Christianity never promised that the world will be any better than it is to-day, and, although we may hope that it will be, that religion would be no whit perturbed if it is not; for the significance of human life does not lie in the success of its social

[1] *Riddles of the Sphinx*, p. 377.

institutions but in the fact that individuals are being forged in this "vale of soul-making" into something that will have significance in a wider sphere? How will organised religion react to the fact of ever-increasing knowledge and an ever-changing background of thought? It is an interesting question.

In the present crisis of the world's history, one thing, however, stands out clearly. It matters profoundly what view is taken of the value of the human individual. Only if we are intellectually convinced that it extends beyond the limits of its atomic consciousness and reaches out, potentially, to that for which the ordinary name is God, can the future of human society be secure. *Abyssus humanæ conscientiæ.* From the nature of the personality of man springs the possibility of the mystical divine union, the promise of a limitless inheritance, and the hope that in literal truth "this mortal shall put on immortality."

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G. N. M. Tyrrell was educated at Haileybury and London University. After a visit to Mexico for the Marconi Company, to introduce wireless into the Western Hemisphere, he enlisted in 1914, was given a commission and twice mentioned in despatches. Psychical research became the main interest of his life and in 1923 he decided to devote himself to it entirely. He was the author of *Grades of Significance*, *Science and Psychical Phenomena*, and *Homo Faber*, and contributed articles to the *Hibbert Journal*, the *Spectator*, *Philosophy*, and other publications. His Myers Memorial Lecture on *Apparitions*, first published in 1943, revealed the psychological character of these memorial experiences. He joined the Society for Psychical Research in 1908 and became President in 1945. His death in 1952 was a major loss to psychical research.

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